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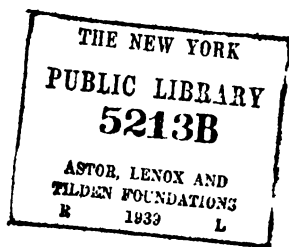
# OUT OF THE WRECK

BY  
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OUT OF THE WRECK.

# OUT OF THE WRECK;

OR,

## WAS IT A VICTORY?

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### CHAPTER I.

"Nothing that is devoid of justice can be a virtue." — *Cicero's Offices.*

"ELEANOR, have you lost your senses?"

Eleanor Marshall did not look like a woman whose senses were likely to go astray on slight provocation, — a face that had been pronounced extremely beautiful in girlhood, now indicating the strength and dignity of maturer years, the capacity to enjoy, the high courage to suffer nobly. It was something more than beauty, something less also. The soft round outlines of youth, the exquisite allurements of coloring, the radiant smile like a June day glow of sunshine, the warmth and brightness had faded, yet a certain fire remained, with the proud poise of the head, the broad brow with its innate nobility, the steadfast eyes out of which the smile had gone that one was sorry to miss, the —

"Something sweet,  
That follows youth with flying feet,"

had been superseded with more perplexity and depression than falls to the lot of happy women but little past thirty. That she had known joy, was certain; that she was tasting a cup of bitterness now, was as undeniable.

"No, Aunt Clara. It is a subject I have been pondering a long time. God only knows the pain and anguish that has goaded me to it. It seems my only chance."

Her voice was what you might expect from the face with its steady lights, — cool, clear, smooth inflections, yet a touch of the latent strength she was compelled to summon, and a suggestion also of the capacity for passion and tenderness. When she spoke you felt as if there were certain songs she could sing incomparably, but having once heard them from her you could never listen to any other rendering of them.

"Eleanor, you must surely know that a woman who leaves her husband exposes herself to criticism, censure, and — yes, temptation. Men seldom respect a woman who throws off the restraints of the marriage vow! I am sure we all regret Tom's course, Mrs. Marshall as keenly as you can; and in time he may see the folly of it."

"When I have been tortured into the grave! When my health and strength fail and my children are left worse than orphans!"

She uttered this with a pathetic touch of despair, as if she saw the picture before her eyes. More than once she had glanced at it. A weaker woman might have longed to lay down her burden, but Eleanor Marshall had always enjoyed the sensation of living. It had for her an intense and absorbing interest, but she wanted in some measure to shape her own career. The reed on which she had leaned confidently pierced her continually, and was there any real virtue in suffering from such wounds?

"But, Eleanor, you surely cannot forget your marriage vow, — 'for better, for worse'? It is the sacredness of this that upholds society. Separated wives are the cause of more real sin and misery — yes, I must say it," warming with her subject. "They make a bid for every man's sympathy, and are doubly dangerous. And I am sure no

woman ever had a more indulgent husband than Tom, when he was himself. It seems only right that you should cling to him in his misfortunes."

"If it was simply misfortune; if he were ill or disabled, I would work cheerfully to the very end, making any sacrifice; only then it would not be a wanton sacrifice of the best there was in life."

Her eyes swam in tears like troubled lakes, but the strong will would not allow them to overflow.

"Women have saved husbands who have gone even lower than Tom. We must admit that he has kept himself quite respectable."

A bitter smile passed over the clear-cut face, — less of scorn, perhaps, than absolute despair.

"I once thought to save him. I counted on his love for me, for the children. Heaven knows that I have tried everything in my power, and it seems to me now that I only pander to the worst side of his nature. He has food and shelter — why should he work for it? I have kept him respectably clad so far, but it is the fruit of *my* labor, not his."

"Yet it has only been seven years since Tom's failure. Is that the extent of your patience? The Bible commands seventy times seven."

"You never knew all!" Eleanor made a desperate gesture, while a flash of indignation swept swiftly over her face. "Can patience and outraged love be measured by years? Aunt Clara, there are hours that have a lifetime of suffering in them!"

"Yes, it is very hard. We all admit that, and think Tom much to blame. Mrs. Marshall was here a few days ago, and she cried over it until I felt so sorry for her. She feels the disgrace keenly. But I have no sympathy for these modern ideas that unsex women. As soon as anything goes wrong she must break up her household, scatter her family, proclaim her troubles to the world, and

work out some grand and lofty salvation for herself. I hold that, having once married, her duty is towards her husband. What does St. Paul say?"

"‘Him that will not work neither let him eat,’" responded Eleanor, with a grim sense of humor. "I am tired of the text, ‘Wives submit yourselves;’" and her eyes flashed with a sharp protest. "Is the one soul of so much higher value than all others? Are the many to be hindered from the best that is in them because the one will drag them down? Is one command so much greater than another? Is the man's duty to love and cherish, and not to be bitter, easily excused, but the woman held to the inexorable letter of the law?"

"Those who do their whole duty gain their reward at last. I have faith to believe in that promise," said the elder, with a stern air of conscious rectitude.

Oh, how pleasant a rudder faith was in the time of clear sailing! Eleanor studied her fair and comfortable-looking aunt, whose husband had always been prosperous and always adored her, whose three children were settled exceptionally well in life. What real heart sorrow had she ever known. She turned now to her strip of embroidery for a sleepy-hollow chair, and stirred among the gorgeous colors with her white, dimpled hand. They seemed to mock Eleanor in her hard, shabby, poverty-stricken life. Had she no right to make it better, to come out into the sunshine? Did God will that she and her children should sit all their lives under the shade of the deadly upas when there was a wide, glorious world? She gathered up her strength once more, but her lip quivered with the effort.

"If I take any step it must be now, while I have youth and health and energy. I can not and will not lead the life that has been mine for the past two years. Do you know what it is to stitch from morning to night for a mere pittance, not to have ten minutes for any kind of

relaxation, to be out of the reach of friendly sympathy and interest, to go skulking along the streets as if the crime was yours instead of another's, to feel yourself shut out, ostracized, simply that a man may lounge about in saloons, and have a place in which he can sleep off his drunken stupor? I have the ability to do better. I am *not* willing to be crowded to the wall. And if I could have a little help—" her voice softened unconsciously.

"I cannot approve of any such wild scheme, Eleanor. Perhaps your uncle could find some quiet country place for you that would take Tom out of temptation. It would be a sin to break up your home. You forget that Tom has some rights in the children. It is cruel to deprive him of every incentive to reform. Children sometimes have an influence over a man when all else fails."

She gave a bitter, wintry smile then. "Children's influence!" she said, with an inflection of utter hopelessness. "Let me tell you this, Aunt Clara. Last Monday evening Tom came in late to tea,—in his usual state,"—faltering over the words, for they hurt her pride cruelly. "Bertie's rubber boots leaked, and he had taken cold, was quite alarmingly hoarse. I began to heat up some molasses with a little vinegar, when his father declared there was no remedy like hot whiskey, and insisted upon preparing some. If I could have taken Bertie away,—but his crib has to be in our living-room during the cold weather. When he had it ready he took the child from my arms, and, in spite of my entreaties, began to give him the vile stuff, made palatable by sugar and nutmeg. Bertie refused at first, and I came to the rescue, and Tom—struck me! It was not the first time either."

Her eyes blazed up even now with a sense of the indignity.

"You were crazy to interfere with a drunken man, and a little whiskey would have done him no harm, I dare say. Some people always use it for a cold."



"Could I stand by without a protest and see my child sip that dangerous, soul-destroying poison, when I knew it had transformed his father from a man to a coarse, insensate brute? A little boy only seven years old!"

"But I suspect it did no good," was the dry response.

"No good," drearily. "What was I against brute strength or a madman's will? Bertie cried a little, but his father threatened. He held him on his knee, and kept the cup at his baby lips. His cheeks grew flushed, his eyes sleepily soft, and as the poisonous fumes reached his brain he began to laugh, his head swayed from side to side, and his clear bird-like voice thickened. Tom sang him an amusing bar-room song, while I looked on with shame and agony! My baby, my precious little boy! Why, I would a hundred times sooner put him in his grave than think of his growing up like that!" and a shudder shook her frame.

"Eleanor, you always had a dangerous tendency to go to the tragic. You imagine and exaggerate too much. I dare say Bertie will grow up to abhor drinking—it is often so."

"It has not been so with the Kingstons. The three sons are drunkards. The child is as likely to learn to love it,—what then?" and the strained eyes, the tense lines about the mouth, the rapid, electric tone, seemed to demand a soul's safety from the complacent woman in the midst of her worldly ease.

"And is it nothing," she resumed, as Mrs. Wilder could find no reply handy,— "is it nothing that my girls should grow up under such a shadow! I think God gives me the right to make a clean, wholesome home for them. I cannot do it with Thomas Marshall; it has come to that. There are things said that no children should hear,—snatches of ribald songs, vulgar innuendoes, and some of the most sacred things of life are sneered at. I cannot save my husband," with a dreary mockery of a

smile, sad for the faith gone out of it, "but I may save my children and enable them to fill respectable positions in life."

"Your ideas of respect are very curious," returned Mrs. Wilder with a little sneer. "If you give him up he will sink lower and lower, yet he will always remain their father. Will that be no disgrace for them? Then a stigma does always attach itself to a girl whose parents have separated. My heart aches for you, Eleanor; but I cannot think you are justified in throwing him off and plunging into this wild scheme. I wish you would consult Mrs. Marshall. Perhaps all of us together might help you to something more—more respectable, less pronounced, and that would not fling you right into the very gaze of the public. Are you aware that everybody from one end of the town to the other will be discussing you?" she asked sharply.

"They have discussed me, and pitied me, and passed by on the other side. Who of my old circle calls upon me? And if I have to work for bread, certainly I have a right to choose something easier, something more agreeable to my tastes. I do not expect to regain any footing with society; my girls will have quite a different youth from mine;" and, in spite of herself, she sighed drearily. "And if I could have had the money—"

"It is because I *do* disapprove of the whole thing. And there are so many other businesses. Now there is being a florist—and you are so fond of flowers. We might all join and help you to some pretty place on the outskirts of the town, where you could have some ground—" and she glanced up eagerly.

"You forget that I have had no training for such an occupation. And the bonnets I used to make and trim always were admired."

Mrs. Wilder frowned until a little crease settled on her smooth forehead.

"And have your daughters standing behind the counter, to be sneered at as pretty milliner girls!"

"Then my own sex must sneer at me, for men do not usually frequent millinery establishments. It is settled," and she rose with sad dignity, her tall, slender form graceful in spite of the passé dress, and her step one that would have done credit to a drawing-room. "I must look elsewhere."

"Nelly, my dear, do be reasonable," in a pleading, persuasive voice. "I would do anything in my power that I saw was for your best good, and so would your uncle; but what do you know about carrying on such a business? We always thought you had a great deal of taste, and yet, when you come to thrust yourself in open competition with people long established, you would be likely to fail. Come, give up this, and let us help you some other way."

"I think I can earn my own and my children's bread without charity; but I cannot deem it my duty to uphold and pander to intemperance, to let my hard-won money go to swell the income of a saloon-keeper, and I am resolved that I will do it no longer. Some way I shall get to what I want. I feel confident of that, though everything looks dark now."

"No one can regret this sad termination more than I. When I think how bright everything looked at your marriage, and how much confidence we had in Tom, what a fine, manly, spirited fellow he was, it does not seem possible—" and Mrs. Wilder put her handkerchief to her eyes.

Eleanor walked across the room with the sad dignity of a deposed queen. In this very house she had spent her bright and joyous girlhood, here for years she had been a favorite visitor, and she had leaned upon this love as one would upon a mother's. What was this inconsequent reasoning to the pangs that rent her very soul? a stone for

bread, indeed! What did Aunt Clara know of hardship and privation amid this luxury? And oh, that deeper, keener agony, the fine, stinging shame like a spear point, thrusting itself in at every vulnerable place, the shrinking of a refined and sensitive soul from that coarse, brutish companionship, the appealing eyes of children doomed to the captious temper of a drunken man!

"Good-by," Eleanor Marshall said with an effort. It seemed as if her heart was breaking.

"Don't feel angry, Nelly. You are excited now; but look at the matter in a cooler mood, and I am sure you will see your duty."

"I am not angry."

"Do you need anything? How are the children off for clothes and flannels? There are some things I meant to look up —"

"They are quite comfortable, thank you. Good-by."

"Come in again soon. If you like, Eleanor, I will talk your plan over with Mrs. Marshall, and see what she says."

"No, you need not."

She groped her way down the wide stairs, the soft carpet cushioning every step, the warm air making a summer atmosphere. Here in the spacious hall, a marble Flora laughingly held aloft a basket of choicest flowers. How the heliotrope and spice-pinks perfumed the place! Through the open drawing-room doors she caught a glimpse of the sumptuous appointments, choice pictures, marbles, bronzes. Did living in all this luxury harden one's heart? Fifteen years ago she had gone out of it, a handsome, happy girl of eighteen, wedded to the man of her choice, and looking up to him in the firm confidence of what she believed to be a life-long faith. Now she was thirty-three, and there was only left the feet of clay, a pile of dust and ashes.

The heavy rosewood doors closed softly behind her,

shutting her out into the bleak world. It was no rose garden of faith now. Overhead a cloudy January sky, beside her a biting blast. Eleanor shivered, though she had not reached the pinched and desolate state of poverty. Her cloak was still warm, and had been remodeled from the garment of better days; but her gloves and boots, if you had examined them, would have betrayed cheapness, though she walked with a certain elasticity of tread that no sorrow or shame could overcome. And as she communed with herself on the great question of duty, of a wife's duty, all the past seemed to flood her mind in startling array.

Early orphaned, Mr. and Mrs. Wilder had opened their hearts and home to her, a beautiful, sweet-tempered girl, arch and bright, who grew up to be a great favorite with society. Her two cousins married young and well, the third, a son, went to Paris to become a trusted member of a business house, and was now well known as one of the prosperous and gentlemanly Americans.

Thomas Marshall, six-and-twenty, the only son of a proud old family, fine-looking, genial, agreeable, and well educated, did not sue in vain for her hand. His three sisters were extremely proud of him. The two elder ones were married to men of long purses and good positions, and shortly after Tom's marriage the younger was married and soon widowed. Report said there had not been much affection in it, but Mrs. Vanduyne had a fortune and a good old name, of which she was extremely proud. She was quite a belle and had refused some flattering offers of remarriage. She and her mother resided together.

Mr. Wilder furnished a house handsomely for his niece. The Marshalls thought Tom might have done much better in a money point of view, but he had been bequeathed his father's partnership in an old business firm that was equivalent to a fortune. Tom *was* gay, a charming good fellow, much sought after, easy, pleasure-loving, generous

to a fault, and a delightful companion in prosperity. If all goes smoothly with men of this type they command admiration on the right hand and on the left, but in adversity they betray a fatal lack of the grand and sturdy strength that buffets through storms.

They lived in an open-handed, delightful manner. Mrs. Marshall gave the most elegant little dinners, the daintiest of high teas, with now and then a musicale, or a complimentary reception to some friend going abroad or returning home. Two pretty little girls were added to the family, then two boys.

The winter of Bertie's birth was an especially hard one. Old Mr. Deering of the firm died, and, when affairs came to be settled and his money withdrawn, the younger members looked aghast at each other. They had all been living extravagantly, and two or three heavy losses followed this misfortune. Friends who were appealed to shook their heads dubiously, and deemed it a sinking ship. Tom applied to his sister, but Mrs. Vanduyne was too prudent to risk her money, and it would have proved of no avail if she had; so the firm gave up business honorably.

Tom accepted a position until he should find a new opening. His expensive habits clung to him; indeed, he thought it hard enough to give up all the rest. There were champagne suppers and various diversions. Then his eldest boy died, and Tom plunged more deeply into amusements to drown his grief.

The next year they took a smaller house, and Eleanor dispensed with her trusty nurse and kept a young girl in her place. Bertie's birth and the sickness and death of the other child had confined her closely, and now she began to note with dismay that Tom never stayed at home evenings. She exerted herself to the utmost; she wore her pretty dresses, she played and sang; but that was not it. He wanted the excitement of crowds and jollity. His gay, good humor gave way to impatience, depression, and

he had recourse to stimulants long before Eleanor became aware of his true state. Through carelessness he lost his position and was out of employment. Business men began to look askance at him and put him off with excuses. "Luck was against him," he said.

When Eleanor found unpaid bills accumulating, she asked herself seriously if there was nothing she could do. There was music-teaching, she might get a few scholars; but if she could make the home brighter and pleasanter for Tom, and keep him in it,—for she began to have a strange and sickening fear concerning him. So she opened her house and took in a young married couple to board. They were gay and charming, but it did not seem to win Tom back to a love for home. Indeed, he often accepted the Gedneys' invitation to the theatre or some little company when she could not go.

Then her eyes were opened rudely. Thomas Marshall was discharged for drunkenness and insolence. He came home to his wife at midnight in a terrible state, and Eleanor went almost crazy. When he recovered he upbraided himself fiercely, and called himself all the monsters in the world. If Nelly only would forgive him !

She forgave him and loved him, and learned to think of him pityingly. She tried to be strong for both, to rouse and inspire him; but he was a slave to the fatal weakness. With a wife's faith and enthusiasm she blamed the misfortunes, the world, the friends who no longer stood ready to help, and with the utmost loyalty clung to him. She felt then that she must be the bread-winner until better times, and filled her house with boarders, for she was much too proud to complain to Aunt Clara. The defection of friends was borne bravely, sacrifices were made without a murmur. She prayed, she counselled, she pleaded, and it seemed as if her faith might almost inspire the dead; but presently her soul took in the sad,

desolating truth, that her husband was not trying as a man should try in so great a strait. She importuned no more for promises, though she endeavored in every other way to rouse him. Was there some fatal weakness in the man?

By slow degrees she found her position much changed. Old friends went in other directions, or, when they met, gave her a kind of patronizing sympathy that cut to the quick. The style of her boarders became different. The refined and courteous gentlemen gave way to a lower grade, not absolutely uncultured, but of the jolly, indifferent type. Tom took the head of the table, sometimes in a captious state, where he was loud and insolent, sometimes, which was much worse to bear, foolishly maudlin with an unmeaning smile upon his flushed face. O Heaven! could she parade the shame to strange eyes?

Two cruel wounds came to her presently. A Mr. Westlake, a plain, kindly man, was going West on some business and might possibly remain. Tom confessed to his wife that he had two or three times borrowed a little change from him and he would like Eleanor to pay it.

"You borrowed money from him?" she asked in her clear, incisive tone, while a scarlet spot burned on her cheek. "How much?"

"I don't remember. You need n't be so confounded sharp about it! He's a good fellow, and he said it did n't make any difference."

"Next time come to me for money." Her heart swelled in secret shame, and she sought out Mr. Westlake, stumbling through a most mortifying explanation.

"It does n't matter, Mrs. Marshall. I never meant to mention it when I found — when he — please let it go."

"No, Mr. Westlake, if you are the true friend I take you to be, you cannot refuse me the honesty of paying this debt, which is as sacred to me as if I had borrowed it."



Westlake searched his memorandum. He hated dreadfully to take the money from her. Most of it had been borrowed months ago, before he understood Mr. Marshall's devious ways.

"I wish you'd let it go!" in a voice of entreaty.

"I cannot," she answered firmly.

"Well — altogether it is twenty-three dollars." He did not dare falsify with her clear eyes upon him, but for all that she wrung the truth out of him reluctantly.

Mrs. Marshall paid the bill, and Mr. Westlake bade her a kindly good-by, his soul deeply moved to pity.

Was there anyone else? she wondered.

She asked her husband that evening. He shambled and hesitated, and, when she insisted, confessed that he owed Collamore somewhere about ten dollars, and Denforth a trifle, — four or five dollars.

"O Tom!" she exclaimed with a great dry sob, "how could you? How could you?"

Tom buried his face in his hands and wept aloud, being in a melting mood.

"O Nelly, you are an angel and I am a brute! I ought to go off and drown myself, instead of hanging on you. I mean to get something to do, and we will be happy once again, my poor darling."

Eleanor had learned by bitter experience that these were withes of straw, not moods of soberness or fruits of repentance. She had pleaded and believed until she had lost the last remnant of faith. Only a miracle could bring that back.

The next episode had in it all the elements of a horrible alarm, an insult so keen that it seemed at first as if she could never look the world in the face again. A Mr. Tyler took Mr. Westlake's place, which was in reality her best room. He was very generous, very kindly, and made much of baby Bertie. Her two little girls she kept away from the boarders' table. She used to feel at times

as if she had met with a friend, but something always held her back from any confidence. She was too proud, too delicate to make any parade of her own griefs or feelings.

One evening Mr. Tyler lingered in the parlor where she sat busy with some trifle, and waiting for a new servant who had promised to come about nine. With her thoughts on other things she hardly noted the rambling, half-sentimental talk until a sentence startled her. Her face was turned upon him in the white heat of indignation.

"How dare you," she cried in vehement tones, — "how dare you offer me such an insult!" and she rose to her feet trembling in every pulse.

"An insult!" in amazement. "People in general are not so easily insulted with an offer of friendship and money at their disposal. You are much too fine-looking and spirited to waste all your years on that drunken brute of a Marshall. I'd have no objection to helping you to a divorce even —"

She walked out of the room in frigid dignity. In her own apartments she gave way to a passion of outraged feeling. How dared any man think such a thing of her. In her tempest of rage she could have strangled him.

The next morning a note of dismissal awaited him. He sent a most abject apology, and begged her if she should ever want a friend to rely upon him. In all matters she would find him silent as the grave.

Her woman's soul had been shaken to its very depths. She made one more effort to rouse her husband. He was still in the bloom of strong, healthy manhood, fitted by education and training to do a man's work in the world, and not grind his support out of the mother of his children. She appealed to his sympathy. The years had been a severe drain upon her; and she thought it best to go back to quiet, household living, to devote herself to

him and the children. She was ingenious, and had her sewing-machine, and there were other things she could do. Would he not join her in this new essay?

Of course he promised, though, truth to tell, he was a little puzzled and regretful. She gave up her house, paid her bills, and retired to apartments. Aunt Clara thought her short-sighted when she had succeeded in establishing herself. She found some embroidery and two music scholars. Then all the children had scarlet fever. To discharge her debts she was obliged to sell her piano. Tom made an essay at collecting, and became so confused in his affairs that she had to come to the rescue with money again.

Mrs. Marshall came occasionally to see her son's wife, and cried over poor Tom. Aunt Clara gave her sympathy, and clothes to make over for the children; but they all liked her to keep out of sight. Their sensibilities were too deeply shocked, their nerves too delicate, to inquire closely into her sorrows. So she made her brave fight alone, matters growing worse and worse with her. Sewing was poorly paid, as she soon learned. The housework consumed much time, the children had various ailments from lack of proper diet and exercise, and most of all happy, childish pleasures.

And then she saw a way out of it all.

## CHAPTER II.

**"Nothing but infinite pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life."**

ELEANOR MARSHALL did not take the most direct way home, although the cold was increasing every moment, and hard little pellets of snow were flung fiercely against each wayfarer. She was wrought up to an extreme of nervous excitement, and her questions had not even been argued, but battled against with the unreason of long custom. Was she right or wrong? Had she been patient in God's way? Was there some great thing she had left undone?

A week ago she had gone to look upon a sight that she had not believed when it first reached her from coarse, gossiping tongues. She would have one more glimpse of it before she decided irrevocably. She passed down the side of the market that stood nearly in the centre of this large manufacturing town. At the lower end were several rather narrow streets, filled with restaurants, beer saloons, pool and billiard halls, the places growing lower in status as they drifted away from the main points of observation. She caught the refrain of noisy songs from young lads in tattered clothes and pinched red faces. Now and then a figure in hood and shawl scurried along, or some bold girl laughed out of a doorway to some rough passer-by. One little urchin jostled against her with, "Say, Missus, have you got tracts?" and she gathered up her garments with shrinking and repulsion. Through uncurtained windows she saw bleared and leering faces, out of which the divine essence of humanity had perished. Talk of perdition! Why it was already here in these vile dens, reek-

ing with odors of bad beer, tobacco, and all manner of filth that even the keen wintry air could not drive out.

Here was the place. The sash was painted part of the way up to protect one from eyes too curious. Down the side of the dingy looking building ran a kind of alley-way with two windows opening on it. The faded and tawdry red curtain was partly drawn, and her eyes wandered around the interior. A sanded floor, strewn with bits of paper and cigar ends, several small tables ornamented with dominoes, a pack of dirty cards, beer mugs, and on one an old briarwood pipe. By the stove sat a man whose slouch hat was pushed up on his forehead, his hands thrust into his pockets, his bearded chin dropped down, half dozing. Fifteen years ago he had been her pride and delight, a noble, tender, polished gentleman. She used to contrast him with one other, whom she knew now loved her well ; but was there any one then she considered his peer ? A swift, strong shudder ran over her ; it seemed almost as if she must fall to the ground.

The door opened. He roused and turned, his face a dull red with the mingled effects of heat and liquor. A rosy, buxom German girl entered, with a broad, coarse, good-humored countenance, strongly accented with stolidity. Her brawny arms were bare, but white and strong. She passed to inspect the fire, and he caught the arm nearest him, but she shook him off with a laugh.

After she had mended the fire, there was a parley. He gave her some money and she disappeared, to come back with two glasses of foaming beer. A sudden movement brought her to his knee. He kissed her, and she laughed, then they jingled glasses. There was no touch of disdain or womanly pride. They drank their beer, and she laughed loud and long at some witticism. Presently, when the beer was done with, she threw both arms about his neck ; but the opening of a door interrupted the coarse caressing.

Three or four grimy workmen entered. They must have been used to seeing this man, judging from their way of accosting him. There was another glass of beer all round, then Marshall sang them a song, which they applauded uproariously. O God, how had he fallen!

She turned away sick at heart. This was the man whom society considered her head and master. Her earnings fed and clothed him, and gave him beer and whiskey to drink. She was helping him on the downward course. Was it right? Must she and her children be the scorn of respectable people, and perhaps be dragged through hideous as well as bitter experiences. "For better, for worse." The words rang in her ear. Ah, if one could be sure of the strict requirements of the "worse."

It was growing dark rapidly. The streets were filled with men and boys going home from work. How many of them dropped into these traps and pitfalls, lured by the warmth and sounds of merriment, and threw away the money that wife and children at home needed sorely. She felt as if she could sweep them all out of existence with a wave of her hand. Did the cry of the wronged and starved souls ever reach God? Was she indeed growing faithless?

She picked her way homeward with a sigh for almost every step, and a half despairing prayer to God. Up two pairs of stairs, she had chosen the top floor for the sake of being more by herself. The room she entered was bright and tidy, with a wholesome atmosphere, and oh, so cheerfully warm to both body and soul! Celia Marshall had the supper-table set and the kettle boiling; Daisy was reading stories to Herbert.

"O mamma, we thought you never would come! How cold you are," kissing her. "What did make you stay so long? Sit down here and get good and warm while I make the tea. And could we treat ourselves to a bit of broiled fish, do you think?"

"Yes," she answered, as she took off her wrappings and smiled upon the little household. Celia was fourteen, very like her mother every way, only much smaller, and with a tender, sympathetic face, at least it was that now. The other children were more like their father. Bertie had the bright versatility that she had once so admired in another and thought it a proof of a happy nature, able to extract honey from any flower. He was easily moved; but sometimes his mother was appalled by a lack of conscientiousness on what she considered vital points.

Her eyes wandered over the little group. It had come to this with them, so early in life, that they were much happier without their father. He generally slept late in the morning, sometimes not having any meal until dinner. Then he would saunter out. If he had a little money, or anybody treated, he was as likely to spend the rest of the day and evening, up to midnight, when he would stumble home, redolent of the fumes of the bar-room. He did not pretend to do anything now. Eleanor gave him money sorely against her will and her better judgment, because she hated constant bickering before the children. It was much pleasanter when he was away.

Were these tender young souls to be trained and developed into men and women who would do their duty honorably in the world, or thrust out to hardship, petty mortification, and open shame? Were they never to have a home free from a foul blot? There was a birth-mark of refinement and intellect, but none knew better than she how constant association could wear one down to a lower level.

"I do not believe papa will come home," said Celia in a tone that strongly suggested a feeling of relief. "So come, mamma."

There was something in the face that reminded you of twilight, soft coloring, and a wavering light that came and went in her eyes. The discords of life would pierce

her to the very soul, wear upon her. Courage she had, but not the buoyant endurance of her mother. It might have been the result of her too early shadowed life.

They took their places. Daisy and Bertie chatted gaily. How handsome the boy looked with his glowing eyes, the rings of fair hair, the tender, rosy mouth with the beguiling curves of a pictured cupid. She always remembered the night she had seen him under the influence of his father's whiskey. Even now she shuddered.

She let them play about after supper and sing their school songs, studying them intently as her hands lay idly in her lap, an unusual thing for her. She was thinking of her cousins' well-kept children, not nearly as pretty as hers. Would Aunt Clara like them to hear oaths and rough words? to have their sweet lips kissed by the vile, fevered ones of a drunken man? Was it nothing, or at least only a trifle, to have her husband stagger home to her from that low den?

Who would think now of inviting Thomas Marshall to an evening company? Why, respectable people would feel disgraced. But she had not sinned, yet she was socially ostracized. Even as a business woman she could make a position for herself; and as for giving up, as Aunt Clara feared she would be compelled to, she had nothing to give up. It would be virtually going into a new world where she might find some nice middle-class working people that would be better than any she could attract to her side now.

That very day she had received notice to move. Mrs. Beach was not a bad-hearted woman; but she had never cordially taken to Mrs. Marshall, and Mr. Marshall's goings out and comings in, especially the latter, scandalized her. The poor in spirit are apt to fling out occasionally.

"A stuck-up thing!" she explained to her sister gossips. "What's the good of her being old Wilder's niece and they living in a palace? She never runs in, pleasant



and neighborly, and is as much afraid of her children as if they were gold. And what is her husband but a lazy, drunken shirk, spending his time in that den of Hassler's, swilling beer and fooling with that girl. I'll give her a piece of my mind some day !”

Not the girl, who was a confessed attraction to the saloon, but Mrs. Marshall, who in the face of all this dared to be proud and reticent. Mrs. Beach was as good or as bad as her word. Then, as a new tenant came for the rooms, she was invited to look elsewhere.

“For we never have had drunken people coming in all hours of the night. I'm worried to death with thinking that he may set the house afire,” said Mrs. Beach.

Mrs. Marshall bowed, but made no comment. There are some tender phases in the intercourse of the poor, but oh, how much that is hard and cruel !

There were not many respectable people who would open their doors to a denizen of Hassler's saloon. Eleanor must go where they were not particular, where there was small distinction made between the low and the poor, or she must take the other decisive step. She wanted so to go out of all this.

She knew well enough how Mrs. Marshall would cry and implore her to think of poor Tom, not to give him up and push him over to certain destruction. Aunt Clara, no doubt, represented the general conservative sentiment. They would all be shocked at her flinging herself before the face of the world as a maker of bonnets and caps.

This was the chance that had come to her. Miss Caruth kept a millinery store, with laces, ribbons, and certain styles of dress trimmings. Mrs. Marshall had only come to know her well during the last three years. She was a plain, ungraceful body, but she had exquisite taste and most skilful arrangement. For years she had lived by herself, and now she had determined to go West and spend the remainder of her life with a widowed sister who owned a small place in a pretty town.

In Mrs. Marshall's early days she had been noted for her taste in all kinds of outward adornment. Often had she been called upon by friends in despair when a few dexterous touches restored them to delight. She had an innate assurance that in a business like this she should be a success. It paid better than any kind of sewing she could get to do, it had variety, it would be a continual pleasure to her.

"I have built up a good business," said Miss Caruth, "and anybody with style and taste would do just as well; indeed, I think a younger person would do better. I have made five or six hundred dollars every year over and above living, and have enough now to take care of myself in a moderate way. I'd like to see you here, my dear Mrs. Marshall, and I'd make it as easy for you as I possibly could. Think it over now."

From one point they went to another. Eleanor opened her heart to this kindly, simple-hearted woman, who sympathized deeply with her.

"My dear," said she, "I'd just go away by myself and live a decent, wholesome life, and bring up my children in the fear of the Lord. I don't think it right to work for him, that he may hang about saloons and drink; it's really helping him on to the bad, you see. If he did not have you, he would have to go to work; and the very shock might make a man of him. But just as long as you are a willing slave he will be the master. I don't know about divorces and such, only it does seem that where people can't agree they had better go separate ways. In this case you would have to do something to protect yourself and keep him away. I'd work for a sick man, but I always did say I would never work for a lazy man."

Miss Caruth offered her stock and fixtures for six hundred dollars. Four hundred was to be paid down and the remainder secured by a chattel mortgage. Eleanor was like one under the spell of an occult charm. Some hidden

knowledge assured her continually that in this work she could succeed, that she might even make a little money for old age. It was quite useless to dream of her husband ever doing anything for her again. As the years went on, dissipation must tell in the shape of impaired faculties. If no one would trust him with a responsibility now, what could he do then? Common manual labor he scouted.

And the children needed something beside ordinary school training. They wanted all that a home implied, — position, society, a chance to develop what gifts God had bestowed upon them. Once Aunt Clara had hinted that she might take Celia presently, but she knew her aunt's pride; and even there, granting that she could let her go from her aching heart and longing love, the father's sins would be visited upon the child. No one could forget that her father was a drunkard.

Mrs. Marshall had a passionate love for purity, refinement, order, and the grace of beauty were it never so simple. She enjoyed wealth and its accessories; but she could make herself content in comparative poverty, if she could take it under favorable circumstances. But she had found that rents for poor people were of the highest, that places were dingy and out of repair, and that she no longer had a choice. Tom's reputation was too well known. She could not afford a cottage by herself, so she must take what landlords would allow her to have. We romance a great deal about poverty; but the fact remains that it does grind souls and bodies into the dust until there is no longer any ambition to rise, until the nobler qualities have become dormant. She had seen some of these hopeless women, and blamed them severely; but she knew now how easy the descent was, how almost impossible it was to keep from being dragged down by these baleful forces.

Like some gift of second sight it came to her. She could go on growing poorer and poorer, send her pretty girls to work in shops, see her boy grow up to rough and

common ways, perhaps take early to drinking. Or she could go out of it all and save them. What if she devoted the next seven years to their salvation? Three souls were surely of more account than one.

Since this opportunity had come to her, several events had occurred to strengthen her desire, her almost frantic eagerness to find a way out of this quagmire, where she must inevitably sink deeper. There had been the night of Bertie's cold; there had also been one occasion when he had struck Daisy such a blow that it had knocked the child down, and left a bruise on her forehead, — he was growing more brutal since he had taken to lounging so much in Hassler's saloon; and then the girl! Eleanor was not so much jealous as disgusted. This coarse, handsome animal put in woman's form, but with no sacred womanly instincts; laughing and jeering with half-drunken men; strong enough to shake them off when their hot grimy hands clutched too savagely at her; bartering kisses for a tawdry gift, or as persuasion ruled; lowering a man's respect and honor for his wife at home, or maddening the younger ones until they were ready to fight about her, — faugh! she would have given anything not to have seen the vision, yet she knew it *was* best. She would not allow herself to ask whether Thomas Marshall had committed any great sin, but even that kissing had discrowned their married love, if such a thing remained. She felt that he had ceased to regard her with the slightest respect. Sometimes he exhibited a cowardly fear of her, at others he was maudlin and wept profusely, blaming himself and declaring that he was not fit to live; but he never reached the point of resolve to make himself fit for life and its duties once more.

All these things had at last decided Mrs. Marshall; goaded her courage up to the point of applying to Aunt Clara for six hundred dollars, as a loan for two years, at lawful interest. She would not beg. Every penny should

be paid back. If Miss Caruth could succeed, she certainly had as much on her side, and an indomitable energy if she could find a place to stand.

It was true she felt quite disheartened at the very outset. There were complications and questions. How much duty on the one side, how much on the other? Her soul was almost rent in twain. "Show me the way, Lord," she cried in her secret agony. "Point out to me the true path, and I will walk in it, even over thorns." But both paths lay pitilessly clear, — duty to husband, duty to children: the one love pure, sweet, clinging, unconsciously pleading, stretching out small, helpless hands to be saved from inhumanity, to be raised to its true estate, to be given a chance with other souls; on the other side the great wrong, the secret endurance, the wounded trust, the rejected love and tenderness, the wasted riches, the womanhood poisoned and trampled into the dust, the light of a whole life darkened. Ah, no wonder the outraged soul cried entreatingly in its anguish!

She saw clearly that she could expect no aid or countenance from the Marshalls. There were no relatives beside Aunt Clara's family with whom she had been at all intimate. Clearly she could not look to relatives. Then as to friends, there might be some, but her inmost soul shrank from a round on such an errand.

There was one. She knew of a person who would grant her this request kindly with no further wound to pride than the stab she would give herself in asking. Why she should have such perfect reliance upon this person she could not tell, since she had given him the deepest pang a woman can give, though not designedly. This flashed upon her almost like an answer to her prayer. Was it an answer? Did she dare believe anything she really wanted was an answer?

The children had played unheeded, but Daisy suddenly grew sleepy. Celia had been studying her lessons and

wondering at her mother's idleness and abstractions. It was so seldom that her hands lay folded in her lap.

"What beautiful hands she has!" thought Celia. "They are so white, and the fingers taper to the very ends, while her nails are so prettily kept. They are like a picture."

Mrs. Marshall roused herself.

"I will put you to bed, Daisy," she began, "and Herbert may go with you a little while. I want to talk to Celia."

There were three nice rooms on this floor and a small hall chamber that they kept for storage. The two girls slept on a lounge bedstead in the parlor, as it was called, though seldom needed for that purpose. The room between was Mrs. Marshall's. Bertie slept in a crib; but, as he had a tendency to colds, it was often placed in the living-room when the parlor was very cold.

Celia looked up in surprise at these words, then gave her mother a quick glance of confidence. The children were undressed in the warm room and wrapped in blankets, for the night was bitter cold. "I might have had a little fire," she thought — she could not afford but one steadily.

When she returned Celia glanced up again inquiringly.

"My dear," she said gravely, "put up your book, and come rest your arms on my lap, as you used to do. It was your favorite position as a little child."

Celia brought a low seat, and, having settled herself, took the soft, white hands in hers, wondering how they kept so soft with all the rough work mamma had to do.

"Something troubles you," she ventured, breaking the silence with a sweet, low tone. There was something peculiar about Celia Marshall's voice, a far-reaching depth, a kind of tender entreaty, not often found in one so young.

"I have a great and grave question to decide, my child. I do not know that you are old enough to take in all its bearings, or how it may affect you in after life, but I

must make some confidence, and soon I shall need your help. It is a hard burden to lay upon you, my child —" and the voice faltered.

"I can guess, mamma. I must give up school and go to work. I know we are very poor — other girls have to do it —" she paused, buried her face in her mother's lap, while a hard, tearless sob shook her. Only a moment, then she raised her sweet face again. "I am not going to be a coward, mamma, while you are so brave," and she kissed the hands that lay in her clasp with the very passion of devotion.

"It would be hard to leave school," her mother said slowly.

"O mamma, why should I deny it? One can do what is right even against one's sense of delight in the thing relinquished. It would take a long while for me to be trained to teach, which I should like better than any real actual work. Three years more, perhaps four, and I could not be spared so long, I know. O mamma, forgive me, but when I see other girls whose fathers are proud of them and work for them, fathers who can be loved and respected, I wonder why God allows other men to bring children into the world to be disgraced! O mamma, you don't know what they say, — that papa is 'in love with a pretty Dutch girl at Hassler's saloon!"

Celia's overwrought soul gave way then to a rain of convulsive tears.

"My darling, my love," her mother murmured soothingly, as she kissed the white face. "Try to be calm, for I have much to say to you."

"And I shall do what you think best. I hate shops and factories, but I do know of one where I could soon earn five or six dollars a week. It would help you so much. Sewing brings in such a little, and I hate it. Perhaps I should like dress-making," she added, "there is room for grace and beauty about that."

"At present, my child, it is not so much what you shall do as what I shall do. I have been considering a step. Miss Caruth has offered me her store at a very reasonable rate."

"O mamma, millinery!" Celia's face was all aglow. "Think of the lovely ribbons and laces and flowers! Why it would be like living in a garden, the loveliest, loveliest thing! I could help you, I know I could; I feel it in my very finger ends," and her lithe body quivered in every pulse. "And in dull times I could study—O mamma, will you, can you take it?"

"There are some other complications, granting that I could obtain the money. The most important one is this—I should separate from your father, and begin a new life."

"A new life!" Celia uttered it caressingly, as if she held in her hands a rare and lovely gift. Then she drew a long, exultant breath, and her eyes glowed with a light like sunrise.

"The question is whether, having married him, I have any right to consider myself and you children, first."

"But, mamma, do you know, if I was ruler of a country or state, I should make drunkenness a crime and punish it as one does stealing or forging. For it is a crime, and one that people are constantly tempted to commit because there are saloons everywhere. Then it leads to so many other things. What made papa—"

"Misfortunes, I suppose, in the first place. Through death of a partner and other matters he was thrown out of business—"

"But could he not have found something to do?" interrupted the child trenchantly. "Suppose you had taken to drink?—mamma, are not women the strongest, the better poised, the more persevering?"

"We cannot stop to discuss all the social and moral aspects. If I should take this business it would hamper



me on every side and drag me down to have such a man about. Women have done it, I know, but it seems to me that I could not be a success. Later in life, when your judgment matures and your views are broader, or narrower," and she smiled sadly, "you may blame me for this step ; but I have tried faithfully for seven years, I have hoped against hope, I have been patient, I have pleaded, I have prayed until the very soul seems to have gone out of me and left a listless, lethargic endurance in its place. A new life would inspire me. Have I any right to reach out for it?"

"Why not, mamma? Is not every soul expected to do its best? And is n't strength found in the very doing, if it is of a kind to inspire one? Oh, we might be so happy! We could have books and see people, and we should not always be listening for something we dreaded, or feeling continually ashamed. Mamma, I think of it every afternoon when I come home from school, and I pray softly to myself that I shall not meet him anywhere. Oh, let us go away and have a home of our own!" she implored.

"You do not inquire what may become of him?"

"Of him?" Celia's face was moved by changes that went flashing over it, showing the activity of her mental processes. "But if you work and take care of four, can he not work and take care of one? He would have to then. And—he would have no one to give him money. O mamma, I sometimes wonder if it is right that he should spend your money in saloons?"

"I think his mother and sister would see that he did not suffer. I have questioned if I did not pander to idleness and vice; but, for the sake of peace and a little comfort for you children, I have yielded against my better judgment. Perhaps to be thrown on his own endeavors might arouse him," and she sighed wearily. "There is another point, Celia. Millinery is not considered one of

the high occupations, unless one could carry it on very elegantly. People will patronize us, and occasionally snub us. We must endeavor not to cross the magic line, but keep within our own boundary."

"It would be a great deal better than this," said Celia decisively.

"I was brought up on the other side of the line," with a faint smile. "Aunt Clara would consider that I had quite disgraced the family. Some one might leave papa a fortune, and he might reform; then all his old friends would receive him with open arms; but if I went into this business it would be remembered against me as something not quite proper. You have had no experience with life, and cannot understand the intricacies of society —"

"It is hardly likely we shall ever go out of that sphere. I suppose I may teach presently, if I am not charmed with bonnets and bows — but — we can never be rich," and the child sighed. "I sometimes dream how lovely it would be. I should study everything, go everywhere."

"That *was* your birthright, my child. It might have been your present position with energy and perseverance. But —"

There was a shambling step on the stair, and the two glanced at each other with questioning eyes.

"You must run to bed, dear," said the mother quickly.

Celia kissed her with a passion of tenderness. "Let us go away," she whispered hurriedly.

Tom Marshall had come home in the devil's own temper.

## CHAPTER III.

**"The first step is nothing. It is the last which is difficult." —VICTOR HUGO.**

To a woman of high and noble instincts, the man she has been compelled to refuse because he came too late and she loves another, always remains sacred. This had been the pang of her happy engagement to Eleanor Randolph. She had not even dreamed that Leonard Howarth cared for her in any lover-like way. He was a year or two older than Mr. Marshall, a rather grave young man, but with a charm that had often won Eleanor from gayer circles. Life for him had well-defined purposes and duties. It was Eleanor's misfortune that she should have met him while she was still so young. True, her aunt favored Mr. Marshall's suit, and his prospects were much better at that time.

A fortnight or so after her engagement she met Howarth at a small evening gathering. Tom had been called away on business, and she was sent in her aunt's carriage unattended. For a wonder she did not dance, but she sang two or three songs exquisitely. He would always remember how they sounded, and they stood alone in his memory. Afterward they drifted to a little nook of a library, and he surprised her by his declaration of love, so earnest that she could not question its sincerity; and she answered it with such deep regret and perfect frankness that it half healed the wound.

"He is not half worthy of the kind of woman she may make, or might under other circumstances," Howarth thought after he had left her. "He can never reach the standard possible for her."

He used to watch them with a curious feeling that strove hard against covetousness. They were so beautiful in their perfect health and symmetry of form and feature, it seemed as if they might be made for one another, and that it was a sin to doubt their ultimate happiness.

Howarth established himself in business in New York, and became a successful business man. An uncle, of whom he had known but little, died, and divided a fortune between him and another cousin, the only one left in their branch of the family. Later, he married; it was a year before Marshall's downfall. How many times Eleanor had been in his thoughts, and how deep his sympathy was for her, no one knew. Now and then he heard some casual account, and, with a man's honorable tenderness for unfortunate womanhood, he longed to go to her as a brother might. Indeed, he once had wild thoughts of coming to Marshall's rescue for her sake, but he found the man had thrown over everything for this one weakness.

By what occult sympathy Eleanor knew him so well, it would be hard to explain. His course had been honorable and manful. He had married an heiress, but *not* for her money, — a woman exquisitely and innately noble, of large mind and soul. They had no children, but their beautiful home was quite a rallying point for young people. How many he had counselled and befriended and assisted over rough ways, only the recording angel knew. He lived a rich and affluent life, and was a moving power in his circle. Some of this she had heard, of his kindliness, of his strength, of his merciful judgments.

Could she go to him and confess the shameful failure of that other life, hers by marriage inheritance? Could she ask him for a loan to help her to save herself and her children. He might consider her scheme wild. If so, that would settle it for her. Miss Caruth's judgment was not a wide one, though it might have in it all the elements of

common sense; the child's was not one of maturity, and of preference rather than principle. It might be a questionable step in the eyes of the world, and would weight her with a secret. Day after day she pondered it, until Miss Caruth pressed her for an answer, for time was flying rapidly.

Aunt Clara had sent her a package of really valuable clothing, and a kindly note in which she proffered any help in her power so long as Eleanor took a wifely course. The probabilities were that she would not succeed in business, not having been brought up to it, and there would be added another mortification. She counselled and warned.

In spite of all this, Leonard Howarth was greatly surprised one morning when Mrs. Marshall was ushered into his private office. He had not seen her for some years. It was still the spirited, high-bred face, the proud carriage, and graceful figure, but the lovely light of youth and hope had settled into grave endurance. The sad lines touched him inexpressibly, yet it was a nobler face, and her attire, though much cheapened, had the unmistakable air of a lady.

"This is a surprise and a pleasure," he said with a quick flush; but he felt the hand he clasped was cold, and he knew that she had not come from any sense of personal gratification.

Now that she was here it appeared as if she could never tell the story. He noted the embarrassment and bridged it over with kindly commonplaces, drawing her on to talk about her children; and then he half guessed. With rare delicacy that had in it no officiousness, he made the way easy for her. Almost before she knew it, she was telling him her plans as she might confide them to a brother. She had never known such a friend, who seemed to gather all the truth from confused and hesitating sentences.

"I have no right to trouble you," she said, checking herself, "I know that."

"You have the great right of humanity, of sorrow; and He who commanded us to bear one another's burdens also said, 'Ask and it shall be given.' Command me to the uttermost. Old friends have the strongest claim."

She confessed a part of her story, not the insults and the blows, but the weary, disheartening struggles that had led to her resolve; her interview with her aunt, and some of her arguments; her little girl's entreaty; her own desire to save all she could from utter wreck.

"I am glad you have come to me," he replied with grave sweetness. "I often try such experiments as these, and they *do* fail quite frequently, but I know *you* will succeed. I am no advocate for the great waste of women's lives that goes on continually. It looks heroic on the one side, but it brings in such meagre results, and it is often more than a life for a life. You are wise to make your experiment now, while you have something to save."

"I want you to understand," she said clearly, though a distressful flush suffused her pale face, "that I am not contemplating divorce. I married Mr. Marshall of my own free choice, and I shall always leave open a door for his return. I shall never forget for an instant that I am his wife in the eyes of God. I shall hope and pray for his reformation. If he came to me a changed man, but ill and worn, I would work for him, comfort him, cling to him. It is not that I have taken up any strange doctrine, or that I have come to doubt God's way, but I must make an effort for my children's sake."

He had heard the story so often, and yet he had known so few men to reform when once settled to habits of indolence as well as vice. Still he admired her lingering hope, and he knew she was the kind of woman to keep her word to the letter. No sickly sentimentality here, no running after strange gods. He looked at the business, too, with a man's clear discriminating eye; not how it

ranked in the world's estimation, and whether music-teaching or fine sewing would not be more in order for a woman of Mrs. Marshall's antecedents. He was proud of her sturdy courage, of her fine common sense.

He turned to his desk and wrote a note for a thousand dollars, payable in five years.

"Will this answer your purpose?" he asked. "It will give you time to turn yourself without pinching. If you should need more —"

"Oh," with a fervent cry of gratitude, "it is twice too much. I have some articles of my prosperity that I could sell, and Miss Caruth is willing to wait —"

"No," he interrupted, "let no one wait. Purchase your store, and put the remainder in a bank for emergencies. Oftentimes a small business is really hampered for money to replenish stock at the right time. I hope to be no worse creditor than your Miss Caruth," with a faint smile. "And keep your trinkets for your girls."

"I have no security to offer you," she faltered.

"I think I have ample in your word. If you are successful, I shall have no doubt about the fate of my money; if you should be unfortunate, comfort yourself with the thought that it will not pinch me to lose it. Any time you choose you can begin payment in whatever sums you like. I take it as a compliment that you came to me; I feel honored by being selected as a friend in the hour of your need."

"I can never repay the kindness," and the tears stood in her eyes; indeed she had much ado to keep them out of her voice.

"Perhaps it may be your good fortune to aid some other struggling soul in its upward march, even the very least of these. No help is ever quite lost. I like to think that God watches over these endeavors though they may seem to fail of fruition."

Mrs. Marshall rose. Mr. Howarth counted out ten one

hundred dollar notes and placed them in an envelope. It seemed a fortune to her now.

"There is one other point on which I would like to warn you," he began, with delicate thoughtfulness. "Even if you are not contemplating a full separation, some legal steps are necessary to protect yourself from Mr. Marshall's intrusion and interference. I have a friend in Westwater that I would like you to see. Anything you choose to confide in him will be sacred."

"Oh!" Eleanor cried in alarm, "I did not want to place any barrier in the way —"

"It will be no barrier to Mr. Marshall's reformation, and you must do it for your own sake. You will find Mr. Darrow quite fatherly and sympathetic. If you should ever want any knotty point settled, go to him at once."

"Thank you."

"Allow me to wish you the utmost success. I shall remember with pleasure that I have a new interest in the town endeared to me by many happy reminiscences of my young manhood; and I have been glad to count you among my friends."

Leonard Howarth bowed her out with the courtesy one might pay to a queen. Her head seemed to swim as she reached the sidewalk, and for a moment the busy world looked strange. Right or wrong she had taken the first step. Was it an omen of success that it had been so favorable? As is often the case, a reactionary mood set in. What if she had made a fatal blunder?

Mr. Howarth glanced after her, — the woman he had once loved! Who beside her husband had a better right to save her?

Mrs. Marshall went to Mr. Darrow's office the next day. She must have this matter settled before she took any important step. It was not a difficult one she found, and yet necessary to her future well being. To be protected against her own husband — the thought seemed horrible.



And yet she resolved to make one more effort. On the very eve of accomplishing her wishes, she would grant Thomas Marshall another opportunity.

So she told him of the notice she had received from Mrs. Beach, and he answered with an angry oath that there were plenty of houses in town.

"Tom," she said, kindly, "let us talk this matter over. It has come to such a pass that for your misconduct your family has been ordered to find a new home. I have paid the rent promptly, I have provided food and clothes. Is this the protection and cherishing you vowed to me at God's altar? I have tried to do my duty; I have been a faithful wife; I have besought and pleaded with you to give up this vile habit that is dragging us all down to infamy. If you have any love left for me or your children, you must prove it now and in this manner: find me a home and get some situation in which you can earn the rent, the rest I will provide. If you fail to do this I shall feel that you do not care for us, and consider myself at liberty to do the best I can for myself and the children. I think there is no law to compel a wife to support the husband when he is in full health and the possession of his faculties."

"Where can you go?" he asked, with a sneer. "Will your Aunt Clara take you in?"

"I can do for myself," she answered proudly. "You must make your choice between us and this monstrous vice. I am in solemn earnest."

He stared stupidly at her.

She had given her word to Miss Caruth, but nothing was to be said at present. If he should reform they would go there as had been planned, but she had not the slightest hope. If she had thought to move him, it would have been but another added to the long list of disappointments. Indeed, he appeared to grow more abusive, more foul in his language, and sharper to the children. She

had to stand between them and bodily harm. Some nights he did not come home at all.

She had not dared to tell Celia at first that their wild dream was feasible. "Wait," she kept saying, "be patient a little while;" but the child had a secret faith that buoyed her up. All these interviews with Miss Caruth must bring about some result.

Westwater had once been a place of gardens and farms, and the town still adhered to the old custom of an April moving day. Early in March Mrs. Marshall purchased her store, and all necessary papers passed between the two parties. At the middle of the month Mrs. Marshall would take possession, to be ready for the spring trade. Miss Parker, Miss Caruth's strong dependence, was engaged, other hands she would take on as business required.

The store was large and pleasant, with two show windows. Back of this had been Miss Caruth's sleeping-room, curtained off from the passage-way. At the rear was another large room that looked into a pretty but small yard. On the second floor there was a quiet family of elderly people, and a photographer used the third floor, which contained but two rooms, in connection with the upper story of the next-door dwelling. There was a rather narrow hall entrance when they did not wish to use the store.

Eleanor smiled somewhat drearily as she contrasted it with her first spacious and lovely home, and for a moment she shrank timorously from her undertaking. Ah, how much easier and pleasanter to be some one's darling, lapped in ease, surrounded with beauty and tenderness and devotion; and yet how immeasurably better than the last two years. Celia was wild with joy. She had not the heart to disturb her faith. Thorns and briars would spring up fast enough in the young life.

For herself, she put off the evil day as long as possible. If her husband had shown one touch of tenderness or

repentance, even of interest, her resolve at separation would have given way. She went to her new house and cleaned the rooms; she sent clothes and furniture, all she could spare until the last day. The two younger children she committed to Miss Caruth's care until the unhappy explanation was over. She prepared Tom's breakfast when she heard him stirring, — if he had noted the dismantling of the rooms, he made no comment.

When would she do this for him again? At the very end, perhaps, when worn by dissipation and disease he came to the last refuge, a hospital. Then she would step in; she must let nothing mar this resolve. While he lived he was her husband.

He sat down with his bleary eyes and unkempt beard, and his clothes that had the appearance of having been thrown on him and lodged awry. This was not the man she had married. No accident, no wasting illness, had brought him to this repulsive state; it had been his own doing. He had made his choice, so had she now.

"Tom," she said, "have you found us any home?"

"Time enough," he growled. "Women beat the very devil for nagging."

"I have nagged very little I think," trying to steady her voice and keep it kindly. "When I gave you your choice, I told you I was in earnest. I have made some new arrangements quite independent of you. From henceforth our paths will lie apart until you reform and become what you promised me at God's altar. I will care for the children and myself, but my home you cannot enter while you cling to this deadly monster, intemperance. I shall go out of this house to-day. For the next fortnight it will provide you a shelter, and then you must look elsewhere."

He stared at her stupidly, his fork poised in the air. It seemed as if he would never speak. She had heard of people who had died from the effects of some sudden

news, and oh, what if she should be his murderer! She watched him with dilated eyes and throbbing nerves, but she might have spared herself.

"This is some of your Aunt Clara's cursed meddling," he began fiercely. "She will learn what it is to part man and wife, or I am much mistaken."

"Aunt Clara has nothing to do with it. She does not even know of my plans. No relative has advised me. I could not stand this life, endurance had passed the farthest point. I told you I could support you no longer. If we had no children, I might have given you my whole duty—to be mocked at and outraged; but I must save them. You have chosen. You have thrown away everything, prosperity, honor, manhood, love," and her voice trembled. "I have gathered up a few treasures from the wreck and shall care for them until you come clothed in your right mind to demand them."

"Where are you going?"

"That does not matter now. I shall not be so far but that you can find me with honorable intent, and the law will protect me from any other. I shall earn my living decently and respectably—"

"Will you? we'll see!" and he made a sudden plunge at her, but missing his aim, fell heavily to the floor.

"O Tom," she cried, "do not seek to add any other crimes to the long list." Then she went to the door and held the knob in her hand.

Tom Marshall began to cry: "Because a man's unfortunate, even his own wife casts him off. I'd never have believed it of you, Nelly! My love has never changed since the day I married you, but I've been hunted from pillar to post; and a man wants some comfort when it's all down hill. I've tried to reform, I swear I have—"

"Not in that tremendous earnest as souls do who want to be saved, who cry out of the very depths to God!

You could have helped all this wretched business. Suppose I had said when little Freddie died that I could not endure it, and found solace in the poisoned stimulants that sap the very springs of life. What if I had left my house and children for hours, and spent your money in some vile den—given my lips to be kissed by a—O God, the thought is horrible! The whole world would execrate me.”

“But you are a—woman,” he flung out sullenly.

“Is not the sin just the same? Society punishes the woman more heavily, and, not content with that, visits the sins of others upon her as well. Heaven only knows how bitterly I have suffered for yours. In God’s sight one human being has rights as well as another.”

“And you throw me off; you desert me! You take my children away! By heaven! I will have my son again.”

“You shall have them all when you resolve to be man enough to care for them. I simply say that not another penny of my money shall go for rum. I will not aid you in your downward career, for it is surely that. What has my patience and long-suffering brought me? You have been more cruelly indifferent this winter than ever before.”

“It’s very hard, God knows,” he maundered, “when my own wife turns against me! You promised to love, Nelly, ‘till death do us part.’”

“What did you promise?”

“Well, I love you. I’ll knock down any villain who says I don’t. O Nelly, Nelly, my heart’s darling!”

What avail was it to talk to such a man? Eleanor left the room in disgust. Taking Celia, they walked rapidly down the street, and two turns brought them to Main Street, as it was called, a broad, quite pretentious thoroughfare, one of the chief business streets. The store was at one end, where traffic had begun to encroach on handsome,

old-fashioned residences that were now divided into two tenements, let for offices, or turned into boarding-houses. Yet it had an air of cleanliness and thrift. The wide, flagged sidewalks, bordered by great elm and maple trees, with here and there the compact, cone-shaped horse-chestnut, were busy with throngs of people passing and repassing. Celia's face grew bright. She could cast the old life of discomfort quite behind her.

"And now," began Miss Caruth as they entered, "let me bid you welcome to your new home, and wish you all success. Come and have a cup of coffee and a bit of steak, you look clear fagged out. Oh, dear! I dare say I shall wish myself back hundreds of times, though it does seem natural that Martha and I should want to be together."

Miss Caruth bustled about in her kindly way. The large room would have to be parlor, dining-room, and kitchen; but it looked very snug and comfortable. Mrs. Marshall had sent her lounge, but had taken Miss Caruth's bedroom suit and some other furniture, as well as the carpet. Pictures had been hung, the children's book-rack arranged, and one side looked quite like a parlor. On the other, the table was spread. Eleanor was too excited to eat, but she drank the coffee thankfully.

For the next two hours she busied herself arranging the goods she had brought, and then it was time to go back for the rest. Would Tom be there? What if he forbade her to move them?

He was not there. He had locked the room, and taken the key; but she had the key to the other one and the door between. She had left him one bed, and several useful articles that would no doubt be sold for a trifle in a few days. Then she stopped to say to Mrs. Beach that Mr. Marshall would of course have the right to the rooms the next fortnight, as the rent was paid. Eleanor's chill-

ing dignity repelled curiosity, and she swept through the hall before Mrs. Beach could recover from her surprise.

"She was actually enough to take your breath away," the lady declared afterward. "I s'pose she's gone to her rich relations, the carriage people who used to come here. I dare say, if the truth was known, Marshall's had a sight to put up with. People don't have such high and mighty airs for nothing. No one's children were good enough for hers to associate with, and that oldest girl's her ma right over again. Still it's hard on the poor man, and may be he'd done different if he'd had another kind of a wife."

Eleanor had left on the table a long letter for her husband that she had written at intervals, breathing the most wifely solicitude, imploring, praying, holding out a hope that all might yet be well, but keeping steadfastly to her conditions. If he wanted her, he knew what to do to win her back. Another she mailed for his mother, and a third to Mrs. Wilder. All needed explanations were made.

She was so restless and nervous that she was glad of an excuse to be changing about and reducing the rooms to some kind of order. Celia danced in and out of the store, and the two younger children were wild with joy. Two customers came in, and Celia waited upon them with an air of responsibility. At nine the lights were put out and doors and windows barred, yet it seemed so strange that the children were a long while in going to sleep.

As for Eleanor, after all was still, she paced the floor with softest steps, torturing herself with unanswerable questions. Was it right? Was her motive high and single, or selfish? Should she have gone on bearing to the bitter end, to the grave, and waited for her reward until she had reached the other country and fallen at the feet of the blessed Master? If Thomas Marshall went swiftly to perdition — but was he not on the high road now? Had she not been powerless these seven years to hinder?

Then she looked at her sleeping children. Yes, it was worth while to work for them, to keep their white souls pure and clean, to train them in paths of purity and tenderness, of honor and strength, to fortify them against the temptations from which no life was exempt. Bertie laughed in his sleep and uttered some incoherent words. Ah, how like that smile was to the lover of her youth! Her heart ached for the joy gone out of it. She had buried that gay and generous lover, but no mound could rise high enough to hide him from her sight while she had his child.

Towards morning she fell into a broken slumber, and awoke with a dreary feeling. Was the new life to begin thus, to be haunted with visions of regret and despair? She had burned her ships behind her and must go on, whether it were in the country of friend or enemy.



## CHAPTER IV.

"We do not perish from enthusiasm, we perish from platitude."

—OCTAVE FEUILLET.

GREAT was the consternation two of Eleanor's letters created, and greater still the sign over the doorway, in gilt letters on a black ground — "Mrs. E. Marshall." Aunt Clara saw it as she was driving leisurely through Main Street.

"To flaunt the shameful story right in people's faces!" she exclaimed to her daughter, Mrs. Mountjoy. "I never supposed she could do such a thing! Right here in the city where she was married, and had been so unfortunate that one would suppose she would be glad to keep out of sight! I thought I had reasoned her out of the foolish idea; but Eleanor always was headstrong, and had no proper sense of family pride. Why, she will be the talk of the whole town!"

"Of course you will take no notice of her. It will be embarrassing, though, to have people recall the fact that she was brought up in our house, and really is a relative. I wish there had been a stone tied to Tom Marshall's neck, and he dropped into the river, before ever he took to making such a beast of himself. Why didn't we bundle the whole crew off where one could never hear from them again?"

"Well, it's a warning! Your deeds of charity are generally turned into a serpent's fang to sting you. I would n't have believed it of my own sister's child. Poor Agnes! it would about kill her if she were alive. She always was so delicate and high-minded, and had such a

fine sense of the honor due one's family. She would have worked her finger ends off in secret before she would blazon her troubles to the world. You don't suppose there is another lover, and Eleanor is meaning to get a divorce in spite of all this fine talk?"

Mrs. Mountjoy looked aghast. The Wilders were one of the good old families of Westwater. Always rich, well educated, the men college-bred and taking to the higher walks of business life, the women proud to the verge of hauteur, with no taint of commonness. They grew up in a refined circle and married well, men of intellect as well as means. One of Mrs. Wilder's sisters had married the Russian Minister of her day and a man of rank, and some of the American cousins had visited the grand estate and been presented to the Czar of all the Russias. Otis Wilder's Parisian home, in all its elegance, was well known and a favorite haunt of travelled Americans, who were always sure to meet people of note there, — statesmen, authors, artists, and the most charming women. There had been very few black sheep in the family, — no scandal with the feminine part, no foolish love affairs to make them the town talk. They were connected with some of the best families, and upheld the code of etiquette of *our* circle most rigorously. Modern rich people, whose record was not altogether clean, could find no place in it, to their honor be it said.

With much that was pure, high, and honorable, there were some narrow, unkindly qualities. Women who were compelled to do anything toward their own support were strictly relegated to outside walks. "You cannot enter here" was written up over every door. True, they did know a few artists and some fascinating literary women of means, who worked for pastime and won some of the high prizes, and several of their own members were highly accomplished. That a large majority of the world must work was a cheerfully recognized fact, but they had noth-

ing in common with such people. No dressmaker or seamstress ever came to meals with them, no person of inferior degree was ever admitted to the charmed precincts of the drawing-room.

This was the first caste, the sort of blood royal, of Westwater. Then came the second circle, quite as proud, quite as rigorous, but who, here and there, showed a strange feather, a marking that was not of the pure regulation order. It was true these slipped in by marriage and otherwise, and held tenaciously to the ground they had gained. After this, people whose grandfathers might have made soap, or sold mackerel over the counter, or had thriven on contracts, or indeed accumulated riches suddenly any way ; and one end of this class reached up, while the other had not yet emerged from shop-keepers, petty manufacturers, and master artisans. It was an old aristocratic revolutionary town, and showed its grandeur in its broad, tree-embowered streets, its houses standing in the midst of ample grounds. But the spirit of later and more vigorous times had invaded it ; its lovely river was turned into manufacturing and commercial purposes ; tall chimneys were reared ; substantial business places crowded out the hundred-years-old, tumble-down cottages ; one half of Main Street, and a great many of the streets intersecting it, were filled with attractive stores and shops, so well supplied that people had small excuse for going elsewhere. Fortunately most of this was in the new part, toward the north, while in the southern direction the land-holders banded together for a common purpose to resist the march of improvement.

Mrs. Mountjoy stared hard at her mother after her last remark. A divorced woman in the family — connected with them by ties of blood ! A man would have been bad enough, but a woman was simply horrible.

“We must nip any such project in the bud !” she exclaimed, with a regal austerity of virtue. “I want to

see your letter,—why did you not bring it? And where did she get the money for this atrocious business?"

"She must have just taken it from Miss Caruth, and expects to pay back as she gets the money; for, of course, the Marshalls would not do such an absurd thing."

"If the Marshalls had looked better after Tom, it would have been more to their credit," said Mrs. Mountjoy sharply. "But I should like to witness Kate Vanduyne's dismay when she sees that sign! Why did n't she have it Mrs. *Eleanor* Marshall, then no one could have mistaken the person."

"But Nelly knows nothing about business. She will make a wretched *fasco*. I was so thankful when she gave up her boarding-house."

"You are mistaken here, mother mine. I will wager a pair of gloves that Eleanor Marshall will become a decided success. She always could do marvels with her finger ends, and has saved the expense of many a party dress by her taste and ingenuity. That *is* the mortifying thing in this wretched business. I don't know what we can do unless we buy her out and shut up the shop. We really ought to have sent them off somewhere into the country; buried them out of the sight of all who ever knew them. One comfort, she is Mrs. Vanduyne's sister-in-law, while she is only *my* cousin. And I do believe I can learn about the matter when Miss Borden comes on Friday. She has been a great friend of Miss Caruth's, and was bewailing her departure the last time she was here. I never ask questions of such people, but I do sometimes listen to what they say."

"Miss Caruth would be very foolish to make such a bargain. There is always a possibility of death or bad seasons. Oh, if I had inquired more closely when she came to me!"

"It is a ridiculous business. I could tear her almost to ribbons, but the best thing is to let her severely alone

until one can move to some purpose. Oh, I must show you some cards that came yesterday, and the most charming note from Lady Cavendish Moreton. She is staying with Mrs. Howarth, who gives her and the Hon. Lord Cavendish Moreton a reception next Thursday. He is expected on the steamer to-morrow."

Mrs. Wilder inspected the cards, simple but extremely elegant.

"Why, Louise," she exclaimed in surprise, "is n't that the Leonard Howarth who used to call on us long ago? I fancied once he had quite a *penchant* for Eleanor."

"The very same. I met them at Newport last summer, where they own one of the loveliest of cottages. Mrs. Howarth is in quite delicate health, — not sickly, but not at all strong. I was there at a five o'clock tea about a month ago, and certainly their city house leaves nothing to be desired. She was an heiress, but you remember Mr. Howarth had a fortune from an old uncle. He is a perfect and most agreeable gentleman. Why did not *we* know about this uncle? Eleanor would have done ever so much better, but certainly Tom's position was most promising. Who ever could dream that an old business house like Wilmerding, Marshall & Co. could crumble to pieces in that manner?"

"The younger partners were too extravagant, and it was very hard times just then. I never specially fancied Mr. Howarth —" with a kind of indecisive intonation.

"He was too grave for a young man; but he is one of the kind who, at middle life, is simply magnificent. Mr. Mountjoy was saying that two or three years ago he went to the help of a friend in great trouble with a mine. They were not sure whether the lead was lost or worn out, but they put in some new machinery and struck a vein of fabulous richness. You might have known, mother, that such a man would be sure to carry weight, and to succeed."

"It is too late now," replied Mrs. Wilder, with a sigh.

"I shall invite the Cavendish Moretons over here, and give them some kind of entertainment, — a *recherché* dinner, I think, with just the cream of the city. Then there are some lovely drives, or would be, if it was a little later in the season. Are you going to the Wetherell dinner?"

"Of course," responded Mrs. Wilder, but she sighed again.

She went home heavy-hearted. There was a Mordecai sitting at the gate that she was afraid she could not dislodge. They had been short sighted not to send Eleanor entirely away, — she saw that now. So long as the patient wife kept in the background, it was well enough to dole her out a few gifts and keep her supplied with sewing; to say, when anyone inquired closely, "Yes, poor Eleanor's marriage was rather unfortunate. She is living very quietly, devoting herself to her children."

That had an aroma of a much higher flavor than the story Mrs. Beach told; but between the latter and the former there was a great gulf fixed, and the torment seldom rose to the purer atmosphere.

Mrs. Wilder's troubles had but just begun. In her own pretty sitting-room she found the elder Mrs. Marshall, whose eyes were absolutely red with weeping.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Wilder, such a dreadful, dreadful blow! I have brought you a letter to read, — I thought I should go crazy over it. My poor son! my dear, deserted boy! Have you heard?"

Mrs. Wilder's face took on an expression of austerity. She might be mortified about Eleanor's step in the face of hoary tradition, but she could not forget that back of it lay Thomas Marshall's brutal vice.

"I suppose Eleanor bore it as long as she could," she began slowly, hardly daring to range herself on the woman's side.

"But she has actually deserted him! She has gone

and taken the children, — it is something about a store. I cannot quite make it out, but women have no call to take men's places in the world. And poor Tom is left there alone in his misery. I went to see him, and it made my heart ache. And I never could have fancied her writing such a heartless letter. Read it," and she thrust it in Mrs. Wilder's hand.

"We must admit," began the latter, with a judicial aspect, "that Tom has been going on dreadfully. For years he has done nothing for his family, and as they grow larger they are more expensive. Eleanor has pinched and done what she could, and we have helped her out, while he has spent his time lounging about in saloons —"

"And you uphold her desertion?" interrupted Mrs. Marshall, with something akin to a scream. "You think she has a right to break God's law and man's law in the face of the divine injunction? She robs her husband of the only incentive to his reformation; she takes away every tie, every hope; she thrusts him completely into the society of vile outcasts. Has she no duty in this matter? Can she go off to her own pleasure and ease, and see him sink lower and lower with the utmost indifference; for if she did care, if she had one spark of real affection, she never could have done it. She took the best he had in his prosperity. He was proud enough of her and the children, and he always was pleasant-tempered until, —"

Mrs. Marshall broke down in a violent fit of weeping.

"I am not going to uphold Eleanor in her present step, but I do say she has had much provocation. A woman cannot bear everything," said Mrs. Wilder.

"Yet how many wives have reformed their husbands? If every woman feels free to break up her family, and fly to something else the instant there is trouble, what is to become of the world? It was not the morals of my day nor the Christianity either. Then it was, 'as long as ye

both do live.' But I am an old-fashioned woman, I dare say, and do not understand the new isms, and the higher life and affinities and all that. I did not suppose she could have won your consent to such a step —"

"She did not ask my consent. I was as ignorant as you, until I received her letter this morning, much of the tenor of this."

"Where did she get the money for such a step?"

"That I do not know."

"But if she had come to us and told us she was in bitter trouble and needed anything, I am sure Kate and I would have done our utmost. And Kate has a little cottage at Glenwood that she had to take back under foreclosure, where she would have gladly sent them; she said so this morning. I am not very well off myself, for so much of Mr. Marshall's money was lost by bad investments; but I would have done anything. I would have shared my last crust with her and the children. It is true I have n't visited them as often as I ought, perhaps; but it has seemed, for this last year or two, as if Eleanor was very cold and reserved. I noticed that she hated to be questioned about her affairs. Perhaps she was planning this. Oh, my poor, poor boy!"

Mrs. Wilder caught at one thing.

"A cottage at Glenwood,' you said. It may not be too late to effect a reconciliation. I do suppose poor Nelly was very much discouraged, and Miss Caruth, no doubt, over-persuaded her; but she knows nothing at all about business. She never was brought up to anything of the kind, and I do not believe she will succeed. It is such a hasty, ill-advised movement!"

"And poor Tom's children brought up in a millinery store, to become coarse, flippant girls, and get themselves talked about."

There was a dim suspicion struggling in Mrs. Wilder's mind that a drunkard's home might be no better place for



young girls than a millinery store, but the swathing bands of custom were strong upon her.

"Perhaps," suggested Mrs. Wilder, "if you were to see her and offer her this home—and it might be the means of Tom's reformation. Pure country air and wholesome living, and freedom from bad associations do so much. Oh, if you could have thought of it before! Let us pray that it may not be too late. We might all join and make up a little income that would relieve Eleanor from any further anxiety. I am sure Mrs. Mountjoy would be only too glad to help."

Mrs. Marshall glanced up with intense relief. "Do you think I could persuade her? I am sure we should all be so glad, and I know it would prove Tom's salvation. I do blame Nelly for not coming to us in any trouble, for we would have helped her through."

"If any one could influence her I think it would be you. She once discussed a business project with me, in a blind kind of way; but I put a damper on it, and have seen very little of her since. She does not seem at all inclined to take my advice, but I always have been very much opposed to women going into public life. The idea of a woman of any refinement or delicacy standing behind a counter and haggling over a sixpence!"

Did Mrs. Wilder forget the women who stood before the counter haggling, to whom the sixpence was but as a drop of dew in their well-filled purses.

"I wonder if I had better go now?"

"I think it best to lose no time, not that I am anxious to hurry you away," with a faint smile.

"Oh, dear, no! I know Tom has not been all he promised, my dear Mrs. Wilder; and no one has felt it more poignantly than his mother. But—Eleanor had a way of holding one at arms' length, and I never could be officious, or drag out all the secret details of married life from another. We all have had our trials, but I always

endeavored to make the best of mine; and, if I could, I would have comforted her or helped her over a rough place. I think she will listen to the counsel of an older and more experienced woman. You were so good to suggest it. At least she cannot question my love for my own son."

Mrs. Marshall wiped away her tears, picked out her silvery crêped hair, and settled her pretty velvet bonnet with its unmistakable thread lace. Then she drew on her faultless gloves and was the perfect picture of a refined gentlewoman, pathetically lovely in her distress.

"I look like a fright," she exclaimed; "but I am going in the street car, and will keep my veil down. Give me your prayers and your best wishes, my dear friend."

Mrs. Wilder considered for some moments after she had gone. How blind and stupid they all were not to have sent the Tom Marshalls into the country long ago! But to Mrs. Wilder such places as Hassler's den were an unknown country that figured in police reports and the scene of an occasional murder. She would have been shocked to see Eleanor peering in at the window.

There was a point on which she could satisfy herself without waiting two days, and every hour was precious. Miss Borden was working for a neighbor, so she put on her wraps again and made an informal call. Could Miss Borden oblige her by giving her Miss Caruth's address?

"Miss Caruth was staying with her cousin, Mrs. Bradford, 16 Maple Place; but this very evening she was to start for the West."

Truly there was no time to be lost. She ordered the carriage at once. Maple Place was a row of unpretentious cottages, bordering on a triangular bit of ground where two parallel streets came to a point.

Miss Caruth was out. Mrs. Wilder waited until patience nearly went out as well. Then the odd little

woman, with "old maid" written on every feature, came in much flurried.

Mrs. Wilder bowed, but did not rise. In her hand she held a well-filled purse.

"Miss Caruth," she began, "I come as a friend of Mrs. Marshall's — in confidence, I may say. As you are going away it might be convenient to — to have matters settled. If you will tell me the exact sum Mrs. Marshall owes you —"

"Mrs. Marshall does n't owe me a penny!" exclaimed Miss Caruth in the utmost surprise. "I offered to let two hundred dollars stand, but she gave me the whole amount. Her receipt will show you that."

"The whole amount!" Mrs. Wilder was strangely nonplussed.

"Yes, six hundred dollars."

"Then I was altogether misinformed. Excuse my mistake," and Mrs. Wilder rose in her wintry pride, bidding Miss Caruth good-day.

Where could Eleanor Marshall have obtained six hundred dollars? She certainly had not jewelry enough to cover that amount. Who was there that she dared ask? Who would lend such a sum on uncertainties? The whole matter was extremely mysterious. Was there some friend, and would there presently be a scandal? Was it preparing the way for a divorce? Mrs. Wilder now felt thoroughly alarmed.

There was a little twinge of conscience as well, — not exactly conscience, but a fear of the world that people often put in its place. She might have shown more interest in Nelly's scheme, and so planned it to surely thwart her in the end. Mrs. Wilder felt so certain that it would not be the best for everybody's interest. Families, as well as individuals, had to be considered. If she had gone to the Marshalls' and sounded the alarm, some different course could have been decided upon. This

country home — why had she not thought of it before? Eleanor, she remembered now, had a curious love for the country.

She had made a large allowance for exaggeration, as she had long since discovered that was a weakness of human nature. Eleanor, too, had an intense and vivid temperament; she enjoyed to the uttermost; but Mrs. Wilder would not admit to herself that the converse should hold good. If Eleanor could add a little imagination to her joys, might she not add a great deal to her sufferings? Really, she never remembered her complaining of positive want. They would not have allowed her to go hungry, to want for decent clothing, to be neglected in illness. If Eleanor had injudiciously interfered with a drunken man he might have pushed her aside, or perhaps have struck her lightly; but certainly Tom Marshall had no cruel strands in his character. His faults were too much ease and indulgence.

Mrs. Wilder had lunch, and then took a view of her well-furnished wardrobe. Should she wear the seal-brown velvet to the Wetherell dinner or the black satin? Both were rich and elegant, perhaps the velvet was the more becoming.

Meanwhile Mrs. Marshall picked her way daintily through the street, and hailed a horse-car with an up-raised hand. She gave a little shake to her dress as she sat down in one of the largest vacant spaces. She was not obtrusive, but you could see in every motion the formal delicacy of the old school, the exclusiveness quite distinct from the rude hauteur of modern wealth. Everything about her was fine and delicate, and had a very faint perfume of violets. Strangers invariably made way for her or offered her a courtesy; and her sweet, mild, half smile was sufficient acknowledgment.

She had her veil drawn closely over her face now, and she turned her head a little toward the window. To show

grief or feeling in a public conveyance was worse than a vulgarity, a sin against all the traditions of her life. Her thoughts would not be so decorously controlled, but rushed hither and thither in wild chaos. She was so surprised at Eleanor's step, it was as if an earthquake had yawned at her very feet; and, mother-like, her care and anxiety was for her boy.

For her training and education had stamped upon her soul the belief that it was a woman's highest mission to suffer in silence. Only a coarse, ignoble soul could make an outcry. Had this come to her she would have allowed herself to be tortured into the grave before she would have made a move towards extricating herself. What God sent upon her must be borne meekly, uncomplainingly. Her beautiful resignation would have filled her friends with admiration, and her memory would have been kept green by tales of her devotion; but is not the struggle for one's own soul and the souls of children as worthy of praise?

Mrs. Marshall fancied she had had her trials. Her husband had been rather quick of temper, but soon over it; and though he now and then indulged in a convivial cup, he never drank to any excess. He supplied his wife with all the appliances of wealth, and was indulgent almost to a point of indifference. Whatever she did was right in his eyes, unless she mislaid his paper or neglected to sew a rip in his glove. Now and then he grumbled about a bill, though he insisted upon his family being well dressed, and absolutely scolded if she bought an article of inferior quality. She had never known the depression of grinding economy, the sacrifice of the pleasures or amenities of society. Her life had run along tranquilly, like a purling rill, fretted here and there by a few pebbles that, after all, only seemed to add to its beauty. Her husband had left her in comfortable circumstances, though of late her income had been impaired by sundry losses, which,

after all, she scarcely felt, since the comforts of life were in nowise diminished.

If Katherine Vanduyne's marriage had not been all it appeared in the eyes of the world, she kept that to herself. She was the third wife of a man who had scarcely reached middle life, and who had been considered the great catch of her second season. That he was not her ideal, though a man of good birth and polished exterior, counted for but very little when, to her great surprise, he asked her to marry him. She had been balancing the merits of two other chances; but she took the third, and became the envy of her circle, which she enjoyed immensely. Her married life came to a sudden termination in its eighth year; and as Mr. Vanduyne had made no will, but had two children by his first marriage, living with their mother's relatives, his estate was equally divided. She kept her elegant house and lived luxuriously, though not in any foolishly extravagant manner, and made herself quite a queen of society at Westwater. In fact she and Mrs. Mountjoy seemed to be running a race, though neither would have acknowledged it, and both were the most courteous of friends.

Mrs. Marshall's home was with this daughter. It is true that Tom's downfall had been a great source of mortification to both. Through Eleanor's boarding-house years she could not be quite tabooed; not that she asserted any claim to her old place, she was too crushed by losses and defections, and she had neither time nor inclination for society. "Poor Tom!" his mother and sister said quietly, as if some mysterious accident had befallen him. He was much too proud, even in his low estate, to go to them for money, or when he had been drinking to excess. These sorrows and mortifications were his wife's portion.

It had always been a question with Eleanor whether stepping down from the middle ranks had proved wisdom.

Tom sank to a lower round, the vulgar, brutish element, the common saloons, the cheaper liquors, more dangerous and deadly poisons. He grew coarse in his manners, often foul in his language, careless about his dress and person. Now he kept out of the sight of old friends, skulked through by-streets, avoiding the other circle. It is lamentably true that the poorer parts of a city abound in temptations on every side. Rents are a little cheaper, small apartments more numerous, and there is the poor comfort of dropping out of sight. We sometimes find thrift and cleanliness in these regions, but oftener the other extremes. The daily companionship hardens, brutalizes. Women clamor shrilly and beat their children in public; men smoke their pipes and utter oaths in the same breath, not so much from a temper of profanity as sheer force of habit.

Eleanor had selected a block in which there were no saloons; and a school within a short distance; but her neighbors were common and not of her kind. Children soon learn to jeer at one another, and poverty stamps the refinements of the rich as "airs." To be better, cleaner, more delicate than your neighbor is a sin; yet these very people who scout cultured ways come to your side in sickness and trouble with a heartiness so real that one cannot help but forgive. After all, is it more than a class badge? Is not a sneer in some places as potent for a heartache as the shrillest vituperation?

Of all these things the Marshalls and the Wilders were, perhaps, purposely ignorant. They did not care to inquire into the petty trials. Her rooms were clean and neat when they visited her, and she was orderly in her attire. When Tom was not at home they never inquired where he was, but salved their consciences with the hope that he was out looking for employment. Twice during a call of his mother's, Tom had been abed in a drunken sleep, but Eleanor had held her peace.

It was very sad, but some way she seemed to get along, and they secretly commended her good taste in not obtruding any distasteful details upon them. Now they were shocked to a point of disbelief that matters could have been at all dreadful. Had not Eleanor some other motive than the one confessed in her letters?

"And to undertake a thing like that; to plant herself on Main Street, and in a store so well known as Miss Caruth's!" almost shrieked Mrs. Vanduyne. "Why the Watermans and the Brocklehursts and the Van Cleves always go there! The idea of Tom's wife standing behind the counter and selling to such people, and our meeting them every day or evening! Oh, it must be stopped! Why, if she had come to us—I can't believe it is so bad between her and Tom. I am sure she would have said something. And there's that cottage at Glenwood that I have had to take for my mortgage,—they could have lived there out of sight of everybody. Mother, suppose you go and talk it over with the Wilders? If I went, I know I should lose my temper and say hard things of Eleanor. I have always thought Tom might have done better."

"Eleanor has been a very good wife," interposed the mother gently. "She always keeps her children tidy, and she is handy about sewing —"

"We do not know how good a wife she has been," interrupted the daughter impatiently. "It's very strange, when Tom is about the first Marshall who has gone to the bad; and in such cases it often happens that both parties are somewhat to blame. Eleanor had nothing but her pretty face, and Tom might have married a fortune as well. Now, if it had been one of the Wilder girls —"

"But Mr. Wilder furnished Eleanor's house, and that was all he did for his own daughters."

"But if Tom had been a son-in-law, Mr. Wilder would



have interested himself to get him into some kind of business."

"O Kate, you know he did get him at Cumming & Ford's," said the mother, in a mild way.

"What was that? He should have set him up in business, and he would soon enough if he had married his daughter. What *is* Tom to do, I would like to know, cast off in this fashion? It is a flagrant wrong against society."

"Poor Tom!" Mrs. Marshall wiped away some tears.

"Well, you go and see if you cannot arrange something. If we only could get them out in the country. It is very strange to make such a move without giving friend or relative warning, or taking a bit of counsel. Eleanor always had such an air of being sufficient for herself. Tom might have done so much better."

It seemed to Mrs. Marshall, as far as she could remember, that they had all been much pleased with Tom's engagement. True, his second cousin, Miss Van Benschoten, with a hundred thousand in her own right and more in prospect, had been very much in love with him; but she was five years older, and her temper was well known through the family. Tom and Eleanor had been such a handsome young couple!

## CHAPTER V.

"There is no pardon for desecrated ideals."

ELEANOR MARSHALL rose unrefreshed after her night of sleeplessness and prayer; for there had been hardly a moment spent otherwise than appealing to God in that dumb, beseeching way heart petitions rise to heaven from lips dry with agonizing words that will not be formed into sentences. She opened her windows. The yards from the next street were quite deep, and left a large breathing-place; and there was a certain tidiness that proved inspiring. A great burden seemed to fall from her soul, almost as if the wrestling with the angel had extorted a blessing.

She stirred her fire and began to arrange some of the miscellaneous articles strewn around. No heavy breathing in the next room, no fumes of stale beer and tobacco vitiating the air, no shivering fear lest some noise of the children should bring forth a half-drunken reproof of profanity. Oh, to live a clean, wholesome, womanly life once more!

Celia heard her and was up in a moment.

"O mamma," and she kissed her with vehement fondness. "Isn't it just delightful to have such nice large rooms, and — and a real store?" That was not what the child had started to say, but some delicate twinge of conscience restrained her from such hasty rejoicing over the absence of her father. The children had been trained to respect him, to make no comment about his state; but to Celia it had always been a subject of intense disgust, of secret shame and mortification. At times she had wanted

to break out into open rebellion, to accuse and upbraid him as the author of the mortification she daily and hourly suffered. She never saw a drunken man in the street but her cheeks flushed with hot shame lest it might be her father. When any remarks were made at school, they seemed directly aimed at her. What the child had suffered during the last year not even her mother suspected.

"The store will be no matter of play presently," Mrs. Marshall replied, in a grave tone, understanding by intuition the deeper joy in her daughter's heart. Alas that it should be so!

"Nothing is real play to poor people. O mamma, I often think how utterly lovely it is to be rich; to be able to spend money for the needs of your soul and brain and not the body alone; to take your pleasures as pure pleasure; to have a real walk out on some country road, and not cheat yourself into the belief that going to the grocery and to school are exhilarating things that make your pulses leap for joy; yet I am thankful to go to school, and I have been glad that we had errands to the grocery, for there are people who have no money. Enjoyment isn't the same; there are degrees in it, and the highest and finest is the best."

It was too true to controvert. "But rich people are not always happy," she answered. Was it not her duty to "preach down" her daughter's heart?

"Are poor people always happy?" with an arch smile, as she glanced into her mother's eyes, reading the deeper belief under the platitude. "I think it is like saying that poor people are always well. Now at school I notice some, yes, many, of the better class will not lose a day through the whole term, while the poorer ones have to stay at home every few weeks. The girl whose seat was next to me all through the fall, Gracie Hardham, — and oh, such a pretty girl, mamma, and she was trying so hard to get into the high school this year, — has had nothing but

sickness at home, and her father has been out of employment so much, though he is a very good man. Two of the children had a fever in the fall; then some of them had the measles, and Gracie had to stay out of school; then a little boy broke his arm; and since Christmas they had scarlet fever, and then Gracie gave up in despair. She has gone to work in the pearl-button factory. I would so much rather be a milliner, and stay at home with you. You will see how good and industrious I shall be."

"My darling!" The mother's eyes filled with grateful tears; yet how curious that Celia had reasoned out so much from her own brief experience!

They prepared the simple breakfast together. The younger ones were made ready, though they could hardly be restrained, — a store was such a wonderful, entertaining thing. Bertie felt that he ought not go to school in view of the great dignity that had been bestowed upon the family. It was almost like having a menagerie or a circus of one's very own.

The errand boy of the next-door store swept off Mrs. Marshall's sidewalk, as he had always done for Miss Caruth. Miss Parker came at eight. Business had not stirred up yet, the weather had been too wintry, but this morning there really was a suggestion of spring in the air. The children were prepared for school, in spite of Bertie's protest, and then Mrs. Marshall settled herself to the task of making her new domicile orderly and homelike. If one's income would admit of having the three rooms up stairs.

A little girl came in with a note from Miss Caruth, who had started in the train of last evening. Mrs. Marshall's face was a study of perplexity and surprise as she read:—

"MY DEAR MRS. MARSHALL,—I have just a minute to say that Mrs. Wilder called on me to-day, and I was so flurried, I don't know what she thought; but she had her pocket-book in her hand, and she asked me how much you still owed me on the store. I said you paid me every penny. I don't know whether that was

right or not; but I was so struck, as one may say, and I thought she seemed — well, offended. I go to night, and have no time to call, but send this note that you may be warned if there is any trouble.

“Yours to command,

“RACHEL CARUTH.”

What could it mean? Had Aunt Clara relented? Eleanor felt thankful that she was not under any obligation to the Wilders. No one save herself could be blamed for the decisive step she had taken. Aunt Clara was quite free to approve or condemn, to hold out the olive branch of amity, and — no, it could never be approval.

It was nearing noon when Miss Parker stepped in.

“There is a very pretty old lady here to see you,” she announced. “Will you come out in the store?”

“No,” said Eleanor, with a curious stricture of the throat. “Send her in here, please.”

“O Eleanor, my poor girl!” and her visitor almost fell into her arms, trembling with agitation. Mrs. Wilder would have sustained her dignity much better.

“Mrs. Marshall,” she said, then, in a softer tone, “mother.”

“We have all been so — so astounded, Eleanor. No one knew, — oh, how could you do such a thing without counsel? And poor Tom left alone!”

Eleanor shut the door quietly, after having placed her husband’s mother in a chair.

“We were so amazed, and I have been calling on your aunt, who says she does not approve. Such a dreadful thing to do, my dear! and Kate has a pretty place in the country where you could have lived quietly, and Tom might have reformed. It is a duty for a wife to try to save her husband.”

“I am well assured that I cannot save mine,” Eleanor replied, in the hard tone of despair. “I have tried everything, it seems to me, at least all in my power. I do think if Tom had been steadily employed,” and she crushed

down the bitter trial of years of selfish indolence, "but no one would keep him in a respectable place; no one would trust him with any money, — not because they considered him a thief, but from his carelessness; and so he has gone down and down until he has no higher ambition than to spend half his time in a vile saloon and the other half in drunken slumber."

Mrs. Marshall's pretty, soft, wrinkled face was scarlet at these words.

"And you leave him in a saloon!" she moaned. "You go off for your own pleasure without caring what becomes of him."

"You are mistaken there," the wife returned with a strange calmness. Why was her heart so cold? It seemed as if she was talking of something quite beyond her own life. "I do care; and I have resolved to help him no longer on the downward road. I have kept a home for him to lounge and sleep and eat. He gave himself no uneasiness as to how the food was obtained or the rent paid. I even had to supply him with money for the vile stuff that dragged him lower and lower every day; that made him coarse, brutal, vulgar, selfish, — cruel to his children, cruel to me! Why, it was like turning the guillotine that was to cut off your own head, nay, worse. That would have been the end, while this was lingering death, not one kindly stroke."

The mother sat aghast at this burning vehemence. There might be something like it in books, and the mention of the guillotine brought up the horrible French revolution. People here in Westwater were not French, but reasonable human beings with duties to husbands not easily annulled.

"I'm sure Tom used to have the sweetest disposition in the world," she began inconsequently, "and when he had money you lived like a little queen. He always adored you so, and you *were* happy. A wife ought to

remember, ought to have some sympathy and tenderness. It is her duty to ; and you are driving him to perdition, — you are, Nelly, if you leave him there alone! Wives have saved worse husbands by patience and love.”

“Love!” she replied with a cold scorn. “He has killed that. He has shown me that he has forgotten the very first letter of it, of a husband’s duty and care. There is a coarse rosy German girl at Hassler’s whose lips have all the sweetness for him ; not that I should want drunken kisses. Her jests and endearments are the kind he enjoys now ; they have the flavor of the life to which he has sunk. His feelings are blunted, his tastes degraded. I have no influence over him. Oh, no, you are mistaken,” she cried with a long, hysterical breath. “And I must save my children, my little son, from such contamination. It is true that, as lives are stinted and hedged about with degraded associations, they grow vulgar, hard, vicious. They learn to laugh at purity, refinement, and culture. I could not have my sweet, innocent children going down that slough.”

“The children,” Mrs. Marshall said, in a dreary tone of amazement, “why we should all have helped with them ; and I am sure they are nice and pretty —”

“I have had to fight to keep them so. Tom would not care if I sent Celia out to work. If you believe there are such grand possibilities for him,” and her voice was unconsciously bitter, “why do not you, his mother and his sister, try your hand at his salvation. You have had no harsh words from him, no blows ; your money, a scant pittance, has not been wrested from you to supply him with the means of further debasement. Will you allow him to sit at your table dirty and unkempt, when the subtle enemy has steeped his brains in foolishness and vulgarity, leaving only an unreasoning will? Will you have him come stumbling home past midnight, reeking with the fumes of the saloon ; cursing you because he can-

not sit straight on a chair, because his trembling hands are not steady enough to pull off his boots; kicking any article of furniture that may be in his way, and answering any chance pleading with the rough rejoinder of drunken men to their associates? Can you respect and honor and love this being who has put himself lower than the brutes? Remember that I am the equal of you all in delicacy, education, refinement, and womanly purity; that I am to the full as capable of appreciating tenderness, love, order, and a happy home, all that he has thrust me out of! I have been turned away from my last house, refused shelter on account of his drunken habits. What was there to keep *me* in the right way? Who was to encourage me, to keep me from becoming an idle, careless, dissipated street brawler? Would it be so much worse for me than for him?"

Her tone had been low and rapid, but her eyes were flashing and her cheeks scarlet. There was something lofty and proud and pure in her very bearing, and the shrinking disgust at her own picture sent a fine tremor through every pulse.

"But, Eleanor, you might listen to reason. Women are expected to — to — and wives —" and the elder lady floundered about in her bewilderment. She had never seen her son's wife like this.

"Yes, I know," Eleanor began more calmly. "It may be heresy, but I begin to think one law binding upon both. I cannot understand why I must live a miserable, distasteful life of privation, to be shut out of all the society for which my early training fitted me, to be shunned like a moral leper, when the crime is his. I think I have a right, as I said in my letter, to rescue myself and my children. I will not plunge farther down that black, fearful gulf."

"But to break up your home —"

"Home!" She could not keep the scorn and indigna-



tion out of her tremulous tone. "Any lodging-house where he can sleep off the stupor of debauch will do as well for him, and an able-bodied man in good health should surely earn his own living if his wife takes care of herself and the three children. I know you have all been kind in various ways, but after all the bread of dependence is bitter. In many of the occupations of woman she can earn just enough for herself. If I have ability to carry on a business, and it seems as if I ought to know as much as Miss Caruth, why shall I not have my chance?"

Mrs. Marshall's delicate old face winced at the word "business," and in a quivering tone she began again:—

"It's just that, Eleanor dear. No woman of the Marshall blood, or of the Wilder's either, ever went into business. It doesn't seem the thing for a delicate woman to stand behind the counter to be sneered at, and have people insolent to you and order you about—"

"I hope to have some *ladies* among my customers," returned Eleanor pointedly. "That is a favorite argument I believe, but does it not presuppose a great deal of ill-breeding on the part of the customer? I do not remember that it was ever my habit to go into a store and insult either the proprietor or his clerk."

"But you always respect men in such a position. It seems right and natural. A woman does go out of her way when she thrusts herself before the public, and you will find—"

"That women are not so kind to women as men are to men,—that I believe is admitted. But when a woman is pushed out of all the safe and delightful corners of her heritage as a woman, a wife, and a mother, when she has to turn bread-winner because her husband would sit by and see her starve, she must be judged by some different standard. If work is respectable for a man, it must be made so for a woman who has need of it."

"You cannot go against society, Eleanor. These laws

are laid down by God. It was the man who was to eat the bread of hard labor — ”

“Which his wife too often has to earn,” interrupted Eleanor.

“I can’t argue,” said the mother. “I only know that by forsaking Tom you have taken away his last chance. And you could have this pretty house of Kate’s, and all be together in a fresh, sweet, country place, away from all evil associations, where the children would grow up pure and innocent, and Tom, I know, would reform. O Nelly, cannot some one persuade you to give up this dreadful business? Think of Celia and Daisy being known as a milliner’s daughters!” and Mrs. Marshall began to weep pathetically.

“Is it any worse, I wonder, than being known as a drunkard’s daughter? I am going against all the traditions of my class; but then you know I dropped out of that class at the time of the failure. Why should we worry about the opinion of people who do not expect to notice us in any event, unless, by some miracle, wealth was to be restored. As to cutting off Tom’s chances of reform — I stand ready to take him back after six months of entire soberness. I think this will prove whether he does really care for me or the children. It seems to me there has been a great deal of false sentiment about these cases. A woman is expected to be long-suffering, patient, hopeful to the end, while her husband wears her life out of her by inches, that he may continue in sin. Should there not be justice to both rather than a useless mercy to the chief sinner? Why is not the pity and the sympathy extended to me? Think of the many sacrifices I am compelled to make. No society, no music, of which I used to be extravagantly fond, not a penny for any kind of luxury or pleasure. Do you suppose I do not feel these deprivations? I have thought the subject over until my brain was in a whirl; but I knew, if ever I made any effort for

my children, five years hence would be too late. My strength, energy, and hope would be gone, and my children would have settled to a round in life where it would be so much harder to lift them up. Oh, you don't know all the days and nights of anxious thought that I have come through; and, having thus decided, I shall remain here. If this change to the country had come last spring, I do suppose I should have taken it; but now I shall settle myself to work. I do not expect it to be a paradise," smiling sadly.

"But the scandal and talk," and the mother sobbed afresh.

"Why should there be any scandal? Let the world say, Here is a woman who has given up some of the best years of her life in endeavoring to reform her husband; and now that she believes the case hopeless, she is not willing to be dragged down to further infamy, neither will she be dependent on the bounty of her friends. She only asks a fair place in the world to do her work."

Mrs. Marshall rocked to and fro, overcome with emotion. There was a stir in the store outside, and the door was suddenly opened.

"O grandmamma!" exclaimed Celia, then she paused, while Daisy stared hard at the unusual state of affairs.

"I must go," said the elder lady stiffly, without noticing either of her grand-daughters. "I suppose it is useless to talk to you, Eleanor, in your blind obstinacy. There may come a day when you will repent, and Heaven grant it may not be too late! I must find my poor, deserted son."

She walked haughtily out of the room. It took a great deal to rouse her, but she was really angry at having failed of her purpose, and she thought her daughter-in-law colder and harder than adamant.

Eleanor walked by her side, but did not proffer any assistance. "I hope,"—she began, but the words died away in her throat.

"Good-day," Mrs. Marshall exclaimed briefly, without once turning her head.

"I thought I would wait and not disturb you," said Miss Parker, presently. "I must run home now, for I shall be very busy this afternoon. I have just taken a large order, — five mourning bonnets and three long veils for the Fairchilds, to be sent home on Saturday. I doubt if we have enough crape."

Eleanor shivered, and wished it had not been mourning gear. She felt strangely depressed. Oh, if she should not succeed! and the note of the thousand dollars rested upon her with the weight of a mountain.

Bertie came running home, bright and hungry.

"It's so splendid to live right here on Main Street," he began with boyish eagerness. "When I am a man I mean to keep a store too, only I shall have oranges and apples, and lots of candy and peanuts. And, — O mamma, could n't I have a stand outside, and sell lots of fireworks on the Fourth of July?"

"Fourth of July is a long way off, my boy," and she smiled down into the rosy, vivacious face.

"And I told all the boys we had moved to Main Street. Some of them did n't believe we had a store. It cost a lot of money did n't it, mamma, — as much as a hundred dollars!"

"A great deal more than that, Bertie."

"O-o-h," with a prolonged intonation.

Celia and Daisy were getting the dinner. They could hardly settle themselves to eating, so certain were they that the slightest noise was a customer; but they were allowed to dine in peace, and went off reluctantly at the last.

Miss Parker was delightfully important. Such an order did not come in every day, "and then deep mourning is always so plain. It's the veil mostly. Old Mr. Fairchild is dead, and now you will see Mrs. Lewis branching out;

for the old man had lots of money, but was awful tight. There's Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. William and Miss Becky Fairchild for the veils, and Mrs. Lewis's two daughters are going in a three-months' mourning. Lily will look lovely, she is so fair. She's just the queerest girl: real cordial and winning; but she's always hoping that after she has been married awhile, she may be left a widow, because she looks so lovely in a widow's cap. I never saw her equal for trying them on. She isn't a bit superstitious. Yes, you surely will have to go to the city. We are short one veil, and may want some trimming. Miss Caruth, you see, was n't keeping stock up to any great extent; for she did mean to sell out, and this is the change of season. But one always wants crape," reflectively.

Miss Parker was a bright, brisk, plump body with an air of great alertness,—one of the women who never seem tall for their inches, nor old for their years. She was eight-and-twenty, but she could have dropped five years easily.

"I shall have a great deal to learn," said Mrs. Marshall, with some degree of apprehension.

"Well, I was so glad of that, you know," returned Miss Parker decisively, "for that meant staying, for me; and I have been here so long that I should hardly know how to change. Miss Caruth and I always did get along nicely, and I kept her from being too old-maidish, for I do suppose at fifty you acquire a tendency that way if you have no one to stir up matters and keep you out of the ruts. But I've seen married people without children just as precise and set in their ways. It's the children after all. Now I'll go at these bonnets—I have their measures. The Fairchilds are splendid customers,—good pay, and never dispute a bill. The girls run in so often to have bows and loops made. They do use a sight of ribbon. And to-morrow will be Friday, and on Saturday

there will be odds and ends to furbish up. Easter is only two weeks off, and then comes the rush for new bonnets. Now if you will go to New York to-morrow and just take a look around, and we'll talk over styles. That's the way Miss Caruth used to do. We would look over patterns and talk them up, and then she would buy. One thing—there's a lovely assortment of lace here; and you have no idea how much of that and how much neck ruching you sell. I talked Miss Caruth into keeping that. 'So many people come in of a Saturday night,' I said, 'and they're always wanting fresh ruching.' And it was just a lucky hit."

Mrs. Marshall smiled. Miss Parker's voice was bright and cheery, it really seemed to inspire one; and she decided she would not go back to her work of arrangement, but talk business with Miss Parker, whose fingers flew as nimbly as her tongue. Miss Caruth had explained a good deal, but it all seemed strangely new to Eleanor.

They had several interruptions. One woman came in with some bits of fawn-colored satin and velvet. She was having a suit made and this just matched the color, so she wanted a bonnet. Would n't flowers look more spring-like than feathers? And how would a wreath of fine daisies do across the top? She was so fond of daisies. Had they any spring goods?

Miss Parker took down a box. "We shall have a larger assortment next week," she said pleasantly, "but these are very pretty and have rubber stems. They hang so much more gracefully."

She displayed them with such art that the lady selected one, ordered some ribbon, and made her promise surely to have it done on Saturday. Presently a baby's satin hood was called for, then some flowers for an evening dress.

"There," exclaimed Miss Parker, "we have worked off quite a lot of old stock this afternoon. If I had

hinted they were last summer's wreaths and offered them at half price, I should n't have sold them. Queer how some people are! Then others come in for last year's goods, hoping to get a bargain. Miss Caruth never put prices down any great deal—it kind of cheapens your place, and gets people in the way of beating down. She has a nice list of customers. Are you looking at that satin? It must be ironed out and the velvet steamed."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Marshall. "I have been quite used to economizing in this manner and altering over. I have made bonnets for my own pleasure and my own necessities, but I should like some instruction. I do not mean to be simply ornamental."

"Don't fancy me impertinent, please, but you will tell splendidly in a store like this. I said to Miss Caruth, when you were first talking about it: 'Now there is a lady who will be a success in such a business. She has just the style—she carries her head the right way.' And if you choose to dress up a little—there are some very stylish customers, and Miss Caruth, good-hearted soul! was dreadfully old-fashioned with herself, though she did have wonderful taste, and was very neat. Most people like neat millinery, but they do not want it fussy."

"I do want to be a success," said Mrs. Marshall fervently.

"And you will, I know. Don't be at all afraid to talk up to people, or to have opinions of your own. I think you will be a judge of what is pretty and becoming, and if you once make a woman look lovely in a bonnet she is your friend forever."

They were interrupted by a customer who wanted to see no end of new goods, — spring styles; who thought everything dear; had heard high crowns were to be worn altogether, and narrow ribbons, no flowers at all, but long ostrich plumes, and none of the brims lined.

Shirred linings looked so warm and fussy. Then she would take a yard of cream satin ribbon, that in the case.

"Twenty-five cents," said Miss Parker.

"Twenty-five!" with a face of incredulous amazement. "Why at Lang & Everett's they have just such ribbon for twenty cents."

"Yes?" returned Miss Parker, with an amiable smile, placing the roll in the case.

"Well, I'll take the yard now, but it is dreadfully dear."

Miss Parker measured it off with a serene air, and the woman went her way.

"She was in here two or three days ago, and bought some yards of that ribbon after much haggling," remarked Miss Parker, with a smile. "I knew she did not want to buy a hat or a bonnet, and I do have to laugh when people beat about the bush so long and scare up one poor little sparrow!"

That was the haggling. It was not so very formidable, but it did waste time.

Eleanor's spirits rose. She arranged some boxes of flowers, taking out those a trifle crushed; she looked over rolls of velvet, and laid them carefully in their papers, with a curious sense of proprietorship. Miss Parker seemed so friendly, was so entertaining and good-humored. Then the children came home, and Bertie was allowed to run up and down the block. The evening brought several customers to inquire about styles and what was to be worn, and one extremely pleasant elderly lady, a warm friend of Miss Caruth's, and a neighbor, living round in the next street, who invited her most cordially to call on her. It certainly was much more entertaining than sitting alone, consuming one's heart with perplexity.



## CHAPTER VI.

"Clothing with golden clouds the desert of our life."—SHELLEY.

MRS. MARSHALL resolved to take Celia with her to the city the next morning. She could not be too circumspect, she well knew, and, for her daughters' sakes, she must avoid the faintest whisper of scandal; yet, who really cared enough about her to talk? She had dropped so completely out of the radius of her old friends. There had been many changes also, and in busy lives one cannot stop for gossip.

Celia was delighted. To take a walk or to go to church with mamma had been the extent of her indulgence. Mrs. Marshall brought out her black silk and an Indian shawl that she had kept from better times, but seldom wore because she had considered it unbecoming to her position. She looked extremely elegant and graceful, and Celia, though simply dressed, was really pretty. You might fancy it the mother's good sense rather than any lack of means.

To Celia it was a gala day. Miss Parker had made a list; and after the purchasing was done they looked and looked, drinking in great draughts of enjoyment. Such lovely bonnets, such exquisite flowers and ribbons, such a world of artistic beauty! They passed a large picture-store, and presently ventured in. To Celia it was a marvel. The treasures of the Louvre could hardly have been greater. Engravings, paintings, lithographs, and articles of virtu costly in their very simplicity and quaintness, or rich beyond description. Her eyes grew luminous, her small red mouth quivered with the intense delight.

The stores were full of lovely Easter cards and articles of the most enchanting description. It was in the early days of decorative art and ornamentation.

Westwater had not arrived at much of it yet, the art circles having drawn their inspiration from the greater city so far, or from abroad. Every year or two some of the wealthy old families took a stroll over the continent, and came back laden with spoils. But Celia's life so far had been cast on the rather straightened side of poverty, not its bald and bare want. They had enjoyed more real physical comforts than many persons so unfortunately placed. Eleanor had stepped completely out of the old associations, given them up with Spartan bravery because she could not bear to cling to them with her burden of shame. Let her bear that unquestioned and in silence.

But she did not check Celia's joy. The radiant face with its intense, soulful eyes, the various expressions flitting across it of surprise, delight, and enjoyment, were a pleasure to behold. It was like a new creation. How deeply Celia would enjoy everything! She hardly realized how ardent the child's temperament was, it had always been so restrained.

They did not reach home until mid-afternoon.

"And it is such a comfort to come here, mamma," Celia exclaimed enthusiastically. "I feel as if I belonged to a part of the world that I could love. It stirs and inspires one. To come back to beauty keeps you from longing for the beauty left behind."

Would she say this five years hence? Would she be able to find beauty and delight in a millinery store? It was a queer question. Mrs. Marshall tried to fancy herself at eighteen suddenly transplanted to such a business career.

She and Miss Parker talked fashions and patterns.

"There were some lovely French bonnets that one could copy quite easily," Mrs. Marshall said. "I shall

take some of the odds and ends to-morrow and see what I can manufacture. I noticed some beautiful straws in a drawer, the rather large, old-fashioned shape; but the material is very like what is used in combination with satin and lace and those lovely soft brocaded silks about which there is such a rage just now. I brought home some samples to show you."

"We must order the very first of the week," returned practical Miss Parker. "If you *could* make any use of those old straws," and she laughed. "You see they are too delicate to press, even if they were sewed over. One never knows what to do with such things, though Miss Caruth never ordered in very large quantities. I know milliners who every year or two sell out half their stock at auction, and get next to nothing for it. There are some beautiful shapes here," running her eye over the list of patterns. "I'll mark what I think will be salable."

"I shall be glad to have you," said Mrs. Marshall.

The next day, Saturday, was busy enough. The mourning was sent home by a little girl who did Miss Caruth's errands, some new bonnets trimmed, and the windows dressed in the best array at their command. Celia begged to do one and her mother consented, though Miss Parker looked on doubtfully. But when she started to go home at noon she ran back with her face in one broad smile.

"I declare, Miss Celia, that window looks just like a picture. I don't believe there's a match for it in all Main Street. It seems as if we must have bought loads of new stock. I don't see how you did it; and those satins are like the loveliest rainbow that ever was! You see how the people will stare this afternoon. It's the great promenade day, you know."

Celia laughed, delighted.

Mrs. Marshall had put her thought into execution, sitting in the back room, where she felt quite free to exer-

cise her ingenuity. One old bonnet had alternate braids about an inch in width, a white one of fancy neapolitan, another of lovely, old-yellow-leghorn color, with much fancy, open work. Taking a small capote shape, she had covered it rather full with soft, yellow silk of a paler shade. Between the rows of straw the silk formed airy puffs, and the crown was arranged exquisitely. Then she hunted among the odd flowers, and found some luscious buds with just enough variety to harmonize without sameness. A little creamy lace, tastefully intermingled, and pale, straw-colored strings completed a marvel of delicate beauty. She carried it out to Miss Parker on her return from dinner, and, holding it up, asked with a smile, —

“Will it do for a beginner?”

“You never made that all yourself?” Miss Parker declared.

“Yes; when I was a young girl I always remade my bonnets, and often made them first hand. My friends used to beg for a share of my transformations.”

“Well, I am beat!” She studied the bonnet and the pretty, gratified woman at her side. “That is as elegant as a twenty-five dollar French pattern bonnet! I shall have to give up. Why, I had no idea! Mrs. Marshall, you are a born milliner. You could make a fortune. There isn’t a woman in this town who could excel that; and what gets me is to think it is all made out of old stock; but that’s elegant straw. I never could understand why they put the dead white with it. It spoiled the bonnet in its day; I said so to Miss Caruth.”

“The white would make up beautifully with pale blue. There is enough of this yellow straw for another, with black lace and violets, which are all the rage now.”

“And I know just who will buy a bonnet like that. Make it at once, Mrs. Marshall. If you only could do it this afternoon. And put daisies in the blue. Make one

of those fluffy, infantile things, and it will catch Ada Brocklehurst. And not one of them must be sold for less than twelve dollars. I don't know but I would use thread lace on the black, and ask fifteen. Mrs. Van Cleve will pay it without a demur. You will have to take the cream of the custom, while I pander to the vitiated tastes or purses of the more common gentry."

"You are so good and generous to me, Miss Parker," said Mrs. Marshall, with a rush of emotion. "Sometimes two of a trade do not agree."

"Well, I'm not silly enough to believe I can make every bonnet that will go out of this establishment; and then, too, I know elegant work when I see it. You'll never need to buy pattern bonnets if you have a genius like that in your finger ends, and can keep up the variety. Now that must be placed in Celia's window, just beside that enchanting rainbow of silks. Could you make the blue one this afternoon?"

"Oh yes," with a smile.

"Would you mind coming out here? You see when the curtain is drawn you are really not exposed; and I might take lessons, if it did not make you nervous."

"I must learn not to be nervous," Mrs. Marshall replied, with a curious little inflection in her voice. "And you are so kind to me. I am so thankful not to be quite alone in my undertaking."

So she brought out her work. Having won Miss Parker's praise in the first instance, she was not afraid to try under her very eyes. Celia had been busy all the morning in housewifely ways, but after the dinner was over her duty was done for the present. The children were restless, and found playing in the yard dull.

"Daisy," said her mother, "if you will promise to be very careful, you and Bertie may get into the horse-car, and ride up to Roselle Park and back again. Will you

promise not to go out on the platform, Bertie, and do just as sister tells you?"

Bertie was wild with delight, and ready enough to agree. Celia made them ready, and saw them started, then she studied her lessons for Monday.

"I suppose I can come out now," she said archly. "I wonder if I could n't wait on customers a little? I know I could measure a yard of ribbon."

"You can go into training," replied Miss Parker good naturedly.

A flush of revolt stained the mother's cheek. Her delicate Celia behind the counter! Then it died away quickly. All that old life of fine shades and punctiliousness that was her's in her youth could never be Celia's, — the dear girl who would have taken up factory life bravely if her mother had so bidden. The innate shrinking from such contact was not deeply grained in her nature, and it was much better, seeing what manner of life the child's was to be.

She made no objection. Celia fluttered up and down, adding a little touch here, glancing out of the window at the promenaders who were beginning to appear in force. There was much driving in the handsome, broad streets; indeed the suburbs of Westwater were especially beautiful. Elegant equipages, with colored drivers, filled with fashion and loveliness, or perhaps two aristocratic, middle-aged ladies, sitting in state, and viewing the passers by with a sort of disdain. Now a family of children, gay, laughing; then some odd country vehicle with an old gentleman and lady, jogging along serenely indifferent to the opinion of the crowd. How entertaining it all was! People dropped in to inquire the price of this or that, to buy ribbon or ruching, or a bit of silk or satin for a bonnet lining, or to ask if Miss Caruth had really moved away.

"That's the Brocklehurst carriage," said Miss Parker.

"And that beautiful girl?" exclaimed Celia, with unfeigned admiration.

"That's Miss Ada. The other sister, Belle, was married at Christmas. She's the one I want to catch with this bonnet. Blue is her color. And oh, Mrs. Marshall, it is going to be enchanting. Celia, bring us the box of those French daisies — right next to the roses."

They selected some of the most delicate ones, and Mrs. Marshall tried several arrangements before one quite suited.

"Now you want a tiny ostrich tip just here. Let us try it on Celia, for she is almost as fair as Miss Brocklehurst. It is Ada's hair that makes her beautiful; she isn't so very pretty otherwise. People do say she bleaches it. Anyhow it is an unusual color for a grown-up person. There, that's just perfection. An imported bonnet could n't be a bit prettier."

"You will make me vain," said Mrs. Marshall deprecatingly.

"Well, you have a genius, nothing more nor less. And why should n't there be a genius for useful things? Now I have a friend who is a born dressmaker. Her draping looks as if it grew. And there have been ever so many girls here trying to learn millinery who could n't make a decent bow to save their necks. A good deal depends upon whether you have a genius or not. Now we will put this in the window."

Promenaders paused to look at the elegantly arranged show window, and then glanced up at the new sign, fancying some one must have come from New York, or some other large city. It did n't look quite like Westwater.

Celia was folding some bits of silk and satin.

"Mamma," she said in a soft, caressing tone, "it seems as if we had been transported to a new and lovely country. I can hardly believe it. And I keep thinking of the beautiful things we saw yesterday. Do you remember those velvet and satin panels with pond lilies and

other flowers? I looked to see how they were made, and I am sure I could make some if you would let me try. They would give us a touch of Easter beauty and remembrance, and perhaps some one would buy them. They are quite new."

"How were they made?" asked the mother.

"There is a thin piece of wood, or one might use very thick card-board, and the velvet is pasted on smoothly, over the edges and all. And the flowers are fastened with tiny silvered or gilt hooks, or I suppose they are most like staples. Oh, if you would let me try! And then there were those lovely painted ones!"

"I used to paint," answered the mother irrelevantly, softly sighing.

"Did you? O mamma, if you could teach me just a little! We draw at school, geometrical and conventional figures, you know; but I am always thinking—I can't just explain it, but sometimes a bit of poetry makes a picture in my mind, and I feel so sure I could paint it. O mamma, it would be the most delightful thing in the world to paint a picture."

Celia was a quiver of excitement. The soft deep eyes, that seemed to change from blue to purple-black, were lustrous with intense emotion, the cheeks like the heart of a rose, the lips curved and eloquent with the very flutter of her breath that parted them the merest trifle. The mother realized, in a sort of dismay, that Celia possessed possibilities of beauty of which she had not even dreamed.

"It came to me so yesterday," the child went on in low, earnest breathlessness. "O mamma, did you ever feel suddenly, just like an inspiration, that you could do a certain thing if you could get to the place where it was possible to do it? And when I put the lovely silks and satins in the window this morning, it came to me again. All that old life seems like a horrible dream, something



that did not belong to us, and we had just come into our own. Why are you so pale, mamma?" and she clasped her arms about her. "We shall never, never go back to that."

"No, we shall never go back to that; but oh, my darling, we must not forget—we must pray daily, nightly, that papa may be brought into this life."

All the instincts of the child's heart rebelled. Why should mamma want—she shuddered; she could not even put it into thought. They clasped each other's hands silently. Oh, had she done right in severing this bond between father and child?

Meanwhile Miss Parker was engrossed with several customers, who cast longing eyes at the two lovely bonnets, and priced others. She saw with great pleasure that some of the carriage people leaned out to catch a glimpse of the window, and she watched for the Brocklehursts to come back. At last her patience was rewarded. They were driving quite slowly, and Ada was certainly taking in the cerulean vision. Then it stopped, and the young girl sprang out lightly. Miss Parker, fortunately, was alone.

"Oh, *you* are here," exclaimed a bright, girlish voice. "Is it true that dear, queer, old Miss Caruth has sold out, and gone away? What are the new people like? That window is a show in itself, mamma remarked it going up; and that bonnet is delicious—just my color and style! Do let me see it. How awfully Frenchy and dainty! Can I put it on? Is it real Parisian, just for show?"

"It is not an imported bonnet. People here would n't want to pay thirty or forty dollars, but it is just as pretty. You will not find more elegant bonnets anywhere."

"It is just a love! I'm always captured with a thing of this sort. Some one had wonderful taste to select it."

"Mrs. Marshall was down to New York yesterday," said Miss Parker gravely.

"That is your new proprietress, is it? Is she nice, stylish?"

"She is going to be a success," and Miss Parker nodded her head decisively. "Then she is a thorough lady and has exquisite taste. She'll take the lead here in West-water."

Miss Brocklehurst opened wide her baby blue eyes. Her hair was abundant, fluffy, and of a ripe wheat tint seldom seen out of childhood. It lay in natural rings about the edge of her forehead, and was worn in a great coil at the back.

"Try it on," said Miss Parker.

"O temptation, thy name is —," and Ada laughed lightly as she threw off her pretty brown velvet hat. "I'm just dying for a new bonnet, and I'm to go down to hear Booth on Monday evening. That lavender and pink is just horrid!"

"You know I told you you would not like it."

"So you did; but it was Mrs. Romaine's choice, you know. Oh, isn't this bewitching? And that feather is in just the right place to make a background for my pink sea-shell of an ear — that is what I have heard it called;" and she laughed charmingly. "Now I'll go out and show mamma; and if you are not too altogether dear — how much are you going to charge?" with a pretty coquettish air.

"The price is twelve dollars. You will not find anything cheaper in New York."

"I never *do* find cheap goods in the city," she returned with playful petulance. "People always cheat me, and talk me into taking frightful things; but this is just heavenly!"

With that she ran out to the carriage. Miss Parker watched the talk with a confident air. Ada certainly looked charmingly lovely.

"Yes," she exclaimed, coming back gleefully, "I am

to have it. Mamma is delighted, and says she will be in to see about some kind of a spring bonnet before long. Oh, let me look at that pretty straw and cream thing. Does n't that look just like Mrs. Faulkner? I mean to send her to look at it, but mine is worlds the prettiest, and yellow kills my hair. Send my bonnet home to-night, will you? I shall want to see it again — you dear little azure cloud!"

When she had flashed out, Miss Parker stepped behind the curtain.

"There!" she exclaimed, "there will be no trouble about the Brocklehursts, and the rest will follow suit. You couldn't have done a luckier thing! Why it *was* an inspiration! This has been a pretty good week for a start."

Mrs. Marshall sat astounded. Celia's sentence floated through her brain — she knew she could do this well, successfully. Ever since her first talk on the subject with Miss Caruth, she had felt this was the place for her, as she must win the bread and make the home for her children. Yet she was amazed at the manner in which it had come about.

The evening was gay and busy, positively exhilarating. The pleasant weather, after a bitterly cold winter, brought people out in throngs, and many paused to glance at the beauty presented for their attraction. But Eleanor felt strangely tired when the lights were out and the children in bed, and the thought recurred to her again and again as to how her husband had taken the enforced separation. Did he regret her in any other manner than merely from a sense of the loss of physical comforts? Had his mother gone to him? Would the shock rouse him to attempt something more manly than that ignoble indolence?

Sunday morning dawned bright and beautiful. It seemed, indeed, as if all the voices of nature joined in

the inspiring song of ages ago, "For lo, the winter is over!" The early bells rang out their sweet chimes. Above Main Street, to the west, the land rose gradually until it culminated in another beautiful broad street known as Mount Prospect Avenue, out of which ran numerous places adorned with handsome residences and aristocratic belongings. The Episcopalians and the Presbyterians had gone in to possess the land years before, and each owned a fine church at opposite ends. The mellowing sound of the bells, as the peals rolled down the hill, was indescribably touching and tender; at least it fell so upon Eleanor Marshall's heart, as if for her, too, the winter was over, as if she were beginning a new life. She chided herself a little for so completely outgrowing the old one in a few days. Had that ever rightly belonged to her? Had she not been pushed into it by the force of circumstances, and the lack of courage to venture upon a decided stand for herself?

For the past year the children had been attending a mission chapel in their immediate neighborhood, but this morning their mother took them to St. Marks, an offshoot of one of the old churches. "You'll like the people there," Miss Caruth had said. "They are like Agur's prayer, neither rich nor poor, but nice and cordial." The sexton found them a seat; the clergyman, a gravely pleasant man, past forty, interested her a great deal. How long since she had been to church with her children on Sunday morning!

As she was walking thoughtfully out after a most delightful service, some one touched her arm gently. Turning, she saw Mrs. Bradford, Miss Caruth's neighbor, who had been first to call upon her.

"I am so pleased to see you," she began kindly. "I asked Miss Caruth to invite you, but I hardly thought you could get up courage to come immediately. Where did you sit? Our pew is forty-three, and there is no one

but husband and myself. All my girls are married and gone. There would be just room for you, and then if anything occurred to detain you at home you would know the children were in good hands. Good-morning, Miss Celia. And are these the youngest? We have a delightful Sunday-school at three. Would you like me to call for the children?"

They had reached the sidewalk by this time, and now paused in a little group. Daisy looked up with beseeching eyes. Mr. Bradford was introduced, and an arrangement made for Mrs. Bradford to call.

"How very kind!" said Celia. "Mamma, Mrs. Bradford has a charming way, just like an old friend whom you have known all your life. I do not feel a bit strange with her. I am so glad to be made at home. I never quite liked the Mission Chapel."

"It was near by for Bertie and Daisy," the mother responded quietly; but she, too, had been touched to the heart by the winning cordiality. How long since any one had taken the trouble to speak to her at church!

It proved indeed a day of rest and refreshing. Eleanor seemed to make such strides back to the old high and fine ideals of life, the truth and purity and honor, that any one who had looked into her face a fortnight ago would have noted the present mysterious change. She held her head more proudly erect, and her eyes burned with a clear and steady flame, as if indeed she might aspire to greater heights in an earnest, serious, womanly way, and would not only rouse her own soul, but the souls about her to noble purposes. Was it, indeed, that hideous nightmare holding her down all these years, that blank, dead wall enclosing her like a prison?

Has she been delivered by some angel of God, or is it a wild *ignus fatuus* of self?

With another week of experience Eleanor felt assured that she had made no mistake in her selection of a busi-

ness, although circumstances had brought it or Providence had sent it to her very door. Did she dare to believe it the hand of Providence? Did God offer a positive rescue to souls perishing in such deserts? Oh, if she could wholly believe it! But, there was Tom —

By the time she had gone thoroughly around the store she had exhumed a mine of treasures. Whether it was the peculiar experience of the past five or six years, of making the most of everything that came into her hands, or the pure result of a happy genius in the right place, she could hardly tell. "You do see the most wonderful possibilities in a few bits of ribbon and a handful of flowers!" declared Miss Parker, and it was true. She made daring and original combinations of the most exquisite harmony. The variety might be exhausted in time, but its very freshness and affluence was enchanting now.

"You extravagant little girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Waterman during her call upon the Brocklehursts early that week. "Laura said you wore the loveliest French bonnet down to the theatre on Monday evening. You will spoil Ada so that no man will dare undertake her," laughingly to Mrs. Brocklehurst.

"It is just a beauty!" declared enthusiastic Ada. "I never had so many compliments before, in the same space of time; so I give the bonnet the credit. And only twelve dollars! I could n't have suited myself better at Madame Bourdinette's for twenty."

"And it really did not come from there? Laura was positive it did or from Julie Le Croix. Where did you find this marvel? Don't be selfish, I am absolutely dying to see it."

Ada displayed her bonnet with much girlish pride, and tied the strings daintily in long loops under one ear.

"Well, there is no question. I never saw such perfect becomingness."

"I knew the instant I saw it that it looked just like me," she said with laughing vivacity.

"And this marvellous personage is —"

"The lady who has taken Miss Caruth's business. I do not know as she positively made it, but her taste must be exquisite to select it. A Mrs. E. Marshall—that is all I know about her."

"E. Marshall,"—and Mrs. Waterman fell into deep thought. "There was a niece of Mrs. Wilder's who married Mr. Thomas Marshall, Mrs. Vanduyne's brother. Her name was Eleanor, I know—a very stylish, pretty girl. Indeed they were an unusually handsome couple. He was doing splendidly at the time; but something happened, and down they went. I heard he took to dissipation, and I never knew what became of them. One does not like to inquire about the black sheep in a family. But it could n't be that Mrs. Marshall either; the Wilders and the Marshalls never would stand such a blot on their escutcheon as a business woman. Mrs. Mountjoy would pack her off to the Rocky Mountains at the first suspicion."

"Well, it is some one with a genius for millinery. One of their windows was just like a picture, and there was another bonnet in pale yellow tones that was just bewitching. I've sent Mrs. Faulkner for that. You see, after all, when a bonnet enhances the small modicum of beauty you may possess," and Ada smiled radiantly to point her sentence.

"There is a great deal in that. I was fool enough once to pay Julie Le Croix twenty-five dollars for a bonnet that was pretty enough in itself, but in spite of her decision it never was becoming; and that plain, old Miss Caruth altered it so that I could take some comfort in it. I'm going straight down to this Mrs. Marshall's to see about a spring bonnet. Twelve dollars! Well, I would n't have believed it."

"And one wants so many bonnets now," said Mrs. Brocklehurst, with a sigh. "When I was young we could wear one a whole season."

Mrs. Waterman wended her way to Main Street with a curious feeling. What if it should really be Mrs. Tom Marshall? She had taken boarders for a while; and then, most likely, both families had joined and pensioned them off to the country. "It is what I should do," thought Mrs. Waterman.

She lingered a moment, inspecting the window. There were some exceedingly stylish bonnets. They had an "air" in their fresh crispness that was not suggestive of pins or stitches. Flowers drooped gracefully, feathers looked as if blown about by a faint zephyr. She turned the knob and walked in. Almost in the middle of the floor stood Mrs. Marshall with a roll of blossom-colored silk in her hand.

Mrs. Waterman was so utterly surprised that she blundered against the code of her set, losing her presence of mind.

"Why, Mrs. Marshall!" then paused, and could have beaten herself.

"Mrs. Waterman," said that lady, with infinite grace and a slight inclination of the proud head that had in it no hint of resuming an old acquaintance.

Mrs. Waterman recovered herself. "I am so surprised," with a smile to cover her embarrassment. "Miss Brocklehurst was displaying her pretty bonnet, and insisted that I should drop in before going to the city. Miss Caruth we have all known for years; but latterly she went off a little in style, though she had an excellent run of custom."

"I have her forewoman, Miss Parker, still with me, and I hope to retain a fair share of her business," Mrs. Marshall said quietly.

"I did not know Mr. Marshall was —" and Mrs. Water-



man glanced with a faint look of inquiry at the black dress which might be mourning or not.

Eleanor summoned her perfect breeding and high courage. The issue must be met decisively.

"Mr. Marshall is not dead," she began, in that indescribable tone of reticence and self-respect. "Circumstances have compelled me to become the breadwinner for my children; and, as I could not write a book or paint a picture, become a prima donna or a famous actress, or take up some of the more delicate but unremunerative employments for women, I have chosen this. So that I accomplish my purpose in an honest and honorable way, I shall be satisfied. Can I show you anything?" with sweet, inquiring suavity, that drew a stronger line than any word Mrs. Waterman could have uttered just then.

They went over spring bonnets, and Mrs. Waterman found herself suited almost before she knew it.

"It really is dreadful for all the relatives," she confessed afterwards; "but Mrs. Marshall will make a very queen of milliners. She has perfectly bewitching taste, and her manners are simply superb. No fear but she will keep her place, and that regal air of hers does inspire confidence. She must have had some training; no one could take up a business and understand all its little niceties so thoroughly. I do wonder what has become of her husband, and if she is divorced. One can find out from the Chancellor," who, by the way, was Mrs. Waterman's cousin.

That lady was not a gossip in the ordinary sense, but the circle in which Mrs. Marshall had once moved was soon duly astounded by the news of such an unheard-of undertaking. If it had been school or music teaching, or any graceful trifle; but to fly in the face of family tradition!

## CHAPTER VII.

"Everyone is as God made him, and oftentimes a great deal worse."

— CERVANTES.

WHAT had become of Thomas Marshall? Eleanor as well as others asked it in vain. She might have learned; she was seized with a wild longing to disguise herself and revisit the old haunts, but she was too busy day and evening for any such escapade. The season, the taste displayed by the "new milliner," and curiosity, led many hither. Was it really Eleanor Marshall who had married so elegantly, who had been their guest, whose dinners and receptions had been quite the rage ten or twelve years ago? The young mothers and the older mothers remembered her well; and the young girls heard the story, and sauntered down Main Street with a strange feeling of interest and wonder that so elegant a woman should take up such an occupation after the education she must have received.

Mrs. Marshall was simply a woman of business. Her innate dignity, and the delicate pride that ever baffles, stood her in good stead now; but there was a mystery. No one had heard any complaints; in fact no one seemed to know exactly what the Marshalls had been doing for the last three or four years; and, whatever it was, it had not rested very heavily upon her was the verdict of society. She showed no unusual traces of care or perplexity.

In truth Eleanor had one of those — shall I say fortunate or unfortunate temperaments of intense and exceeding vitality, and a buoyancy often mistaken for hope, as well as a degree of indifference. So far her physical health

had not suffered materially. The change, activity, and excitement of her new business acted like a draught of some rare century-old wine. Her step grew more elastic, her smile more frequent, and it had always been a fascinating one. She tried honestly and earnestly to make herself a success, and the very energy she threw into it seemed to vitalize every pulse.

Celia, too, interested her curiously. The child made her half a dozen Easter panels in various colored velvets and satins, and fastened clusters of flowers to them. But the one in which she took the greatest delight was a cross of white silk violets with golden stamens on a black velvet background. She had obtained from a stationer, in small gilt letters, the words, "Christ is risen." It was so neatly and artistically done that the mother praised generously.

"Dear mamma," began Celia, "I hope no one will want to buy it, for I feel as if this should be your Easter gift. I have never made you anything choice and beautiful, — there always were so many necessary things to do."

But, alas! the very first one to be sold was this.

They had talked the price over with sensible Miss Parker. Celia said, —

"Those we saw in New York were from two to five dollars. Mine are all prettier than the cheapest, but not quite so elaborate as the dearest."

"Then say three-fifty for the two finest, three for the next, and two-and-a-half for the others. If they hang a little, you can lower the price."

So Celia put four of them in the window the next Saturday, and three were sold, her cross, as I have said, going first of all. Early in the next week, the rest went; and she made two more, one a cross of purple violets on a white satin background. This caught the eye of Ada Brocklehurst, who was extremely enthusiastic over it.

When Celia paid her mother for materials used, she found she had nearly seventeen dollars left.

"O mamma!" and her eyes sparkled with delight; "would you have dreamed that I could do anything like that? And now I want to buy some paints; and, if you will teach me a little, I know I could learn."

She was in a tremor of happy excitement.

"My darling," said her mother tenderly, "listen to me a moment. My painting was merely a young lady's accomplishment, and I have mostly forgotten that. I would rather have you take lessons of some good teacher. But you know we both feel anxious about your examination for the High School, and you will have some hard studying to do. Suppose you lay away your money, and wait until vacation, when you have nothing else to do; and then you can devote your whole attention to it."

Celia consented with secret reluctance, although she knew it was the wisest plan. A new possibility had opened before her child, Eleanor realized. A month ago her highest ambition for Celia had been the vocation of a teacher. True, this might prove only a girl's enthusiasm, but her inmost soul responded to the earnest belief that it was something higher. Work would be Celia's portion; and she wanted to choose something that would inspire her years of womanhood, not merely to make a temporary bridge to marriage.

After Easter, business went steadily on. An apprentice was taken and a new worker engaged. Eleanor was very quick and deft, and she employed every moment, making her household duties as light as possible. Many a night her lamp burned late, and her busy fingers flew as if by magic. Until she was out of debt she must strain every nerve.

Often during these quiet hours she thought of her husband. April had passed. The new tenant had taken

possession of Mrs. Beach's apartments, doubtless; and where was he? a homeless vagrant, sleeping and eating wherever he could find shelter for a trifle! There were times when she felt she must go out and search the streets, and bring home the wanderer, when her heart ached and her eyes overflowed with tears, when she thrust the delicate fabrics aside lest she should mar their freshness by her grief. And yet — did Thomas Marshall ever sit up till midnight working for wife and children? Hard, common sense told her this would be folly.

One thing she kept steadily before her. When he came to the last, when idleness and shame and degradation had done their worst, and a hospital was his only refuge, she would take him in. If by that time she should be sufficiently prosperous to have a home not quite so circumscribed, its doors should open to him with a sad but true welcome, and she would minister to him with a wife's tenderness.

What had befallen him?

The day on which his mother left her daughter-in-law in as angry a frame of mind as her placid nature would allow, she went straight to Cedar Street, although not much used to walking. This was a very decent block, with only one saloon at the corner. She found her way up stairs, — Mrs. Beach's hall door was never fastened in the day time, — and knocked at the door in vain. The tenant on the next floor heard her presently.

"I don't believe Marshall's at home," she called up the stairway. "His wife's gone off and left him; and to my thinking she served him just right, — great, lazy, drunken vagabond! He comes home sometimes in the middle of the night, and is off again before this, about ten o'clock."

Mrs. Marshall sank down upon the dusty step of the upper platform. She was tired, hysterical, frightened, and gave way to another flood of tears. Poor Tom! In that moment her sympathies were all with him, and

Eleanor seemed the cruelest of womankind. To be deserted in such a place as this!

When she had become a little tranquil she rose with tottering steps and found her way down again to the street, so bewildered at first that she hardly knew which way to turn. Indeed, before she had gone far she would have fallen but for the kindness of a stranger.

"I am very ill," she said tremulously, "do you know where I could get any kind of a conveyance?"

"Come in the drug store, madam. Dr. Searle's buggy is here, he may be going the right way."

Dr. Searle saw that she was very much excited, and completely prostrated. He managed, after some difficulty, to learn that she wished to go to Mrs. Vanduyne's in Westminster Place, and kindly assisted her into his buggy and drove her thither. Mrs. Vanduyne came down, greatly alarmed, and had her carried to her room at once, where she fainted away, and lay in a half-hysterical condition the remainder of the day and evening.

The next morning Mrs. Wilder came to know the result of her embassy; but poor Mrs. Marshall was so weak she could make no further explanation than that she had seen Eleanor, who had proved cold and indifferent and set in her own projects.

"It is a shame!" declared Mrs. Vanduyne with virtuous severity. "If Eleanor had said a word, we should all have been glad enough to help her, and to keep them together. I would have provided her with a home, done anything that was proper. But to go off this way! My private opinion is that there is some lover back of all this, and before we know it we shall all be dragged into a shameful scandal. Why could n't she have gone somewhere else if she must try such an undertaking? Now in New York no one would have known her. And what we are to do with poor Tom —"

"I think you are mistaken about the lover," said Mrs.

Wilder rather indignantly. "Eleanor has been tried to the utmost, and she has taken this step for her children's sake alone."

"Oh, well, if you uphold her, and are ready to recognize her in her new position, my opinion will not have much weight. Still, I think, the verdict of most of our friends will be on Tom's side. It certainly is a great and grave step for a wife to leave her husband, to break up her home."

"I do *not* approve of the step," Mrs. Wilder hastened to say; "but everyone will admit that when a healthy, well-educated man does nothing for the support of his family, but lounges in bar-rooms and saloons, and allows his wife to earn a precarious living by her needle —"

"It need not have been precarious. I will give them a house to live in and do whatever else is necessary —"

"But she will not take it," moaned Mrs. Marshall.

"Recrimination is a thing I never indulge in," declared Mrs. Wilder impressively, as she rose with the utmost hauteur. "We shall probably not agree as to what Eleanor has had to suffer, nor all the causes that have led to her decision; but, while I cannot approve, I think those who know the truth must pity her, and will not censure her severely. Allow me to wish you good-morning," and she swept out of the room with a passion of injured dignity.

"I would n't care quite so much," flung out Mrs. Vanduyne angrily, "if it was n't for her name, 'Mrs. Marshall,' on a sign in a public street! Even if it had been private millinery! People had forgotten mostly about them. And now the Wilders are angry and will say anything against Tom. I do maintain if he had married a different woman he would have been a different man. But it is wretched, wretched business! Is there no hope of her taking him back? Something must be done with him."

What the something was could not be easily decided. Mrs. Marshall was ill in bed for a week. The story began to be whispered about, that Mr. and Mrs. Tom Marshall had separated. There was something mysterious about her taking Miss Caruth's store—the curiosity was great to know about the money part of the transaction. Mrs. Wilder dared make no use of her secret; it was more respectable that people should imagine she owed Miss Caruth than that she had borrowed the money from a friend. Every one would suppose the friend to be a man, and that would lead to horrible surmises. If Mrs. Wilder could feel *quite* sure there was no disreputable secret back of it all!

Then the Cavendish Moretons came, and were entertained "by our well known and highly esteemed townsman, Mr. Mountjoy." Real aristocracy bowled along the streets in the Mountjoys' elegant barouche, or the two ladies disported themselves in a handsome Whitechapel cart with the prettiest of bays. There was a reception to which the cream only of the town were invited, and Mrs. Vanduyne left out. There were two choice dinners, at one of which a senator and two judges figured, and the other largely adorned with outside guests, people of note. It was a great balm to Mrs. Wilder's wounded vanity.

Mrs. Vanduyne had no such compensation. She secretly admitted that she was foolish to be betrayed into vulgar disputing, and she hated Eleanor Marshall so bitterly that she would have been glad to call down any fire from heaven on her head, any swift judgment or signal misfortune. Instead, she found her becoming a certain attraction and success. She did not dare sneer, for she did not desire to discuss the affair in any manner, but affected a lofty ignorance, and made the most of her mother's illness.

It was decided, as soon as Mrs. Marshall could endure the interview, to send for Tom. The summons was treat-



ed with the utmost indifference. Tom managed to get his meals and his liquor for a fortnight ; then he sold his few belongings and took cheap lodgings, but in another two weeks his exchequer was exhausted. Then he bethought himself of a certain tender, pitying letter of his mother's, and hung around Westminster Place one day until he saw his sister Kate drive out in her carriage. Then he rang the door bell, and asked to see Mrs. Marshall.

The young colored lad eyed him with infinite disdain.

"I don't believe you can," he said insolently. "What name shall I announce?"

"Give her this; she'll see me," and he thrust a bit of crumpled paper into the waiter's hand, who curled his lip in disgust.

"The fellow wants a good knocking down," muttered Tom, as the door was shut in his face.

It was opened presently. "You are to go up stairs—back room, first door."

"See here, none of your impudence!" said Thomas Marshall, but the waiter took no further notice.

Tom was not drunk this morning, only maudlin, with a tendency to be cross. He entered his mother's room with a shambling step and tugged at his slouch hat. He looked so poor and untidy, so utterly forlorn and tramp-like, that his mother was startled. She had not seen him in six months or so, since the infatuation at Hassler's had begun.

The room was delicately beautiful, as befitted an elderly lady of birth and refinement. She sat in a great, easy-chair of soft, deep-red plush, with an antique lace tidy over the top, fastened with gilt-headed pins. Her gray silk dress fell in waves about her feet, and was trimmed plentifully with lace, while a little square of fine and costly point did duty for a cap. On her white fingers sparkled two diamond rings and a plain gold circlet. She still looked frail, and now an expression of pain and hopelessness swept over the sweet, wrinkled face.

"O Tom!"

With that came a passionate flood of tears, and the thin fingers interlaced each other.

Tom hung his head with a latent sense of shame. Then he recovered himself. "Been sick, old lady?" he asked, trying to put some solicitude in the thick voice.

"O Tom, to think of your being brought to this!" she wailed. "How could Eleanor turn you out homeless?"

"That's it," said Tom, catching at the first shadow of an excuse. "A man wants a home 'nd a wife. And 't was along o' that she devil there in the house, fillin' El'nor's head with lies, 'n then warnin' her out of the house. 'N the Wilders set her up, I know. El'nor's high strung, a chip of the old block, 'n old lady Wilder's got temper 'nough to light a match at. She took my children, too, 'n I loved my children. Bertie's a pert little chap, 'cute 'nough for anything. But a man ain't nothin' without home 'n children," and Tom began to snivel after the fashion of his class when rum has weakened brain and nerve.

Mrs. Marshall glanced at her son in the utmost amaze. She seemed paralyzed, stunned as by some sudden overwhelming knowledge. In past times she had seen men drink on some festive occasion, she had passed others in the street who reeled at every step; but in her own sheltered, tranquil, prosperous life she had kept from any actual contact with such trouble. She ceased weeping now, and studied him with startled eyes. Was this her son, whose youth and manhood had been proud and honorable; the gay, chivalrous young fellow who was a favorite everywhere; the man who has been trusted friend, trusted guest, who, in his adversity, took no mean advantage, paid away his last dollar, was generous to a fault; the educated, refined, well-bred gentleman? What had worked this change? Had Eleanor?

It was so easy to blame the wife. She had him under

her own eye, her own influence, how could she have let him drop lower and lower all these years, until he was hardly recognizable? His very talk was uncultured, like some common laborer; his gay, ringing voice, coarse and thick; his clear, laughing eyes, bleared; his fine complexion, sodden. Yes, as Kate suggested, some fault must have been hers.

"Did she tell you about her going away? Did she give you no chance to repent and reform? O Tom, you might have done so much better!"

"I promised to. I said I'd get a house 'n get something to do; 'n I would, only that blasted Caruth woman came along. I'd like to break her neck, 'n I will some day. She'd no business to interfere between man and wife; 'n a wife's no business to go away from her home, 'n break up a man's life; that's what I say." And Tom Marshall brought down his fist upon the bureau with such force that Mrs. Marshall sprang from her chair.

"O Tom," she entreated, "don't be so hard, so rude. You are so changed, I can hardly believe it is you."

"S 'nough to change a man, to take away all his children;" and he began to whimper.

"But, Tom, when you did have them,"—rather incoherently, in her thin, soft, cultured voice,— "I am afraid you were not always —"

"Who has been complaining, — El'nor? I was always good to her, until she took to being so high and mighty, 'n holding me off at arm's length, 'n settin' the children up against me. Bertie loved me. He was n't afraid to come to his poor father. I've had such dev'lish luck all these years, 'n everything 's gone against me; but it 's been seven years, 'n then luck changes. I'll get something to do and make a fortune yet, 'nother one, an' ride in my carriage before I die; but you may bet your life El'nor won't be in it! I'll have my boy, and she can have the girls. Girls no great shakes anyhow, just like their mother. Any-

body who leaves me 'n tight times, and can't stick to a fellow when he's goin' down hill, 'll never have the spendin' of my money. Luck'll turn,—it 'most always does. She'd be glad enough to come back."

"O Tom, if you would get something to do, and be yourself once more," implored his mother.

He gazed vacantly at her.

"Mighty hard up just now," he muttered. "El'nor went off 'n took everything but a bed; robbed me of everything, 'n left me to go where I could, and she living in style and flaunting about! Where'd she get that money, I want to know—she and that dev'lish Caruth woman conniving together."

"O Tom!" almost shrieked the poor old lady. "Don't be so dreadfully coarse and profane!" How could Eleanor have allowed him to fall into such habits? That she had suffered from them, that she had seen her innocent children shocked, and feared for Bertie's habits, never once occurred to the elder lady. The poor woman was not strong enough to cope with him, and great shivers of disgust crept over her. Leaning back in her chair, she sighed and wished Eleanor could have seen her duty to her husband. Or if Katharine were only here.

"Old lady, you're looking used up," Tom said, watching her. "If you'll give me a trifle, 'nough to find me a night's lodging, I'll get out of this luxury 'n elegance. 'Tis n't quite my style nowadays."

She was helpless to argue, to advise, to call him to a sense of his present degradation. She tottered across the room, and took a pocket-book out of the bureau drawer. It contained fifteen dollars. "This will last you a little while," she said tremulously, handing it to him with cold, white fingers.

"Much obliged, I'm sure," and Tom made a kind of shame-faced snatch at it, averting his eyes. "Would n't

have come, if I hadn't been awfully hard up;" and he shambled to the door, nodding a careless good-by.

When he was gone she covered her face with her hands, and bitter tears of pain and shame forced their way through her fingers. Her son! No, it cannot be. Has not some one been playing a trick upon her? Ah, if it might only be! Her heart grows bitterer against Eleanor; it seems as if *she* must have had a hand in this complete ruin. Wives always have so much influence over their husbands. Did she? She does not consider that point. Did Katharine? But then it was Eleanor's *duty*.

Another week's illness succeeded this interview. She confessed to Katharine that Tom had been in and she had given him some money, but she could not tell the worst.

"Do you think he had been drinking?" asked Mrs. Vanduyne sharply.

"I—I am so little used to seeing people in that state," temporized the poor lady. "He has changed terribly. It was the ruin of his life for Eleanor to desert him."

"She had no business to cast her burden off upon others," declared Mrs. Vanduyne sharply. "If every wife and every husband did it when matters went wrong, there would be a fine state of society. Does she expect us to look after him?"

Lying in her luxurious room, pillowed on a soft couch, poor Mrs. Marshall felt that the world had gone sadly wrong, that the wives of the present day cast off their responsibility too easily. Mrs. Vanduyne was very angry at the complication; for she was suffering on every side, while the Wilders seemed scarcely touched, for the Cavendish Moreton visit had swallowed up smaller matters. To be left out of all those gatherings was a positive insult.

About a fortnight later Mrs. Marshall received a note from her son begging for a little money. Business was

dull, and he had found nothing to do; but he meant to go to work. He must have some clothes, and he had not a cent with which to get a meal. The mother's heart softened toward him; it had never been hard for any one save Eleanor.

She had to ask her daughter to get her some money, as she was not able to go out.

"This will be intolerable!" said Mrs. Vanduyne angrily. "Why doesn't he go to Eleanor? She is so much the style in her new business that she could afford to throw him a bone. It is very nice to take all one's years of prosperity and turn one out in adversity!"

This time Mrs. Marshall sent her son twenty-five dollars. Kate added a few stinging words of advice. She had not inquired very deeply into the matter, but from what she had gathered she knew Tom's haunts were most disreputable. What was to be done?

There was one course. She would shut up the house and go to some fashionable seaside. The Mountjoys and Wilders would be at Newport; she could try Long Branch, and when she tired of that there was Lake George and Saratoga. The rest was Eleanor's business—let her fight it out.

So the house was put in order for a fitting. Valuables were sent away, closets double locked, windows nailed down and doors bolted, and one trusty servant left to mount guard. Mrs. Marshall's health was made the excuse for so early a departure. And as Mrs. Vanduyne shook the dust of the city from her silken garments, her whole heart rose in bitter judgment against her sister-in-law. It did not occur to her that Eleanor's burden of the last five or six years had been heavy, although she found the merest tithe of it so intolerable.

Thomas Marshall, gentleman and college graduate, with that certain fine intangibleness of pure old blood that had filtered through a refined and honored race, went to

a second-hand clothing store and shed his rags, now that the needle of his industrious wife could no longer be used in his behalf. Then he paid a two weeks' score at a cheap lodging-house ; he would make sure of that shelter. Afterward came a sickening debauch, from which he roused to find himself again destitute. He hunted up odd jobs, he lived as such people do, — going hungry, crawling into any kind of shelter for the night, and grudging the very clothes he wore that he could not sell them for rum.

Now and then, when his brain was not altogether stupefied, he bethought himself of what his mother and sister had said of Eleanor. What right had she to go off and leave him to struggle alone ? If he was weak and easily tempted, so much the more need of his clinging to some one. If anything would induce a man to reform, it would be the tender association of wife and children. What if he had cast Eleanor off in the day of his misfortune and failure ? He strengthened himself in virtuous indignation with this thought. He had a right to go to her and demand another chance. There was no opportunity of getting at his mother, and as for Kate — yes, he would go to Eleanor, not as any humble suppliant, but as her master, armed with the rights the law had bestowed upon him at the marriage altar.

Much as Mrs. Marshall pondered over the fate of her husband, she was unfeignedly thankful that he had not molested her. She even began to suspect that she had been over hasty in invoking the law for her protection. So far she had prospered beyond her wildest expectations. True, her own relatives, true to class instincts, had let her severely alone ; but many old friends had been really cordial. Perhaps it was her own fine adaptiveness that had won them. As Mrs. Waterman said, she neither reached up to the forbidden fruit, nor railed at the grapes for not turning their royal purple bloom to her. She was

a business woman, a milliner who understood the rare art of making other women quite as beautiful as circumstances would permit. She even suggested different styles of hair-dressing to enable a customer to wear some coveted shape or desired trimming; and when women glanced at themselves, and saw their best points brought out, they took her to their hearts of vanity and self love. In such a world there were no social calls, dainty luncheons, and exquisite garden parties.

On the other hand, she held herself regally above anything but business. She had dwelt so long on the golden side that she understood class feeling and prejudice thoroughly, and avoided all chance for slights or wounds, with the fine breeding of higher knowledge than mere rules. True, now and then, some overbearing customer had attempted insolence; but it was checked by her brave and steady eye. Once the wife of a contractor who in a few years had amassed a fortune sent for her to consult about some orders she wished to give; but Mrs. Marshall's answer was so to the point that, after fuming awhile over the extreme ignorance of business people, she descended upon her in all her state and majesty, and began with insufferable insolence. Mrs. Marshall listened to her harangue.

"I think, Mrs. Chedister," she said in her clear, incisive voice, that seemed to cut as it went, "that I hardly care to number you among my customers. I shall probably not be able to suit you, and in a large city like New York there is a greater variety to choose from than it would pay me to keep. I am extremely busy, and have the honor of wishing you good-morning."

Mrs. Marshall turned with the dignity of an empress, and left her lofty customer standing at the counter.

"O Mrs. Marshall," cried one of the girls, "that was too good! To think of Mrs. Chedister putting on so much magnificence, when she worked in a factory before she was married, and Mr. Chedister kept an oyster saloon.



It is even said that she used to bake for the saloon lunches. Not that it hurt her, but she of all others has no right to despise labor."

The story did get whispered about, much to Mrs. Chedister's discomfiture.

On the other hand, Mrs. Marshall found herself making some really delightful friends, that she could not have met with in her old life. Mr. and Mrs. Bradford came frequently. They were plain, well-to-do people, with much general information, and that clean, strong, wholesome air so inspiring. Mrs. Bradford was extremely fond of children, and took a great fancy to the two younger ones, Celia being much engrossed with her studies, and her own fairy dreams.

There was one other person who had touched Eleanor with that intuitive nearness born only in people capable of some of the highest strains of friendship; this was Mrs. Van Cleve. About her there was no question in Westwater. It was not merely wealth and honorable records; there had been statesmen, a bishop or two, professors of note, *savants* who added some brilliant discoveries and stamped solid truths into the literature of their own times. Its ladies, too, had been the peerless kind of women who are acknowledged queens without much heart-burning, their lovely and gracious superiority being a kind of birthmark.

As Miss Parker predicted, she had been caught by the bonnet, which proved charmingly becoming; she had also taken Celia's panel of purple violets on the white background; she had likewise heard a part of Eleanor's story; but she had been interested in the woman herself. Perhaps if Eleanor had seemed to discern her interest and fanned the flame, she might have drawn back with a kind of delicate reserve; but it was as if Mrs. Marshall said to her: "Your path lies among the lilies and roses of life, but mine is on the solid wayside turf, with here and there

a daisy bloom." She fell into the habit of lingering. "You keep such exquisite flowers," she would say, "that I must sit and look at them a few moments, if you do not mind." She saw other glimpses as well; the tender, gracious mother; the fond, obedient daughter; the gay, wilful little lad, with his arch, merry face; the graceful, harmonious woman, moving about with no sharp angles, no jarring tones, and no weak lines,—no looking back to certain joys left behind, no vain endeavors to make people understand that they had been there, that she belonged to another sphere and had stepped out of it, but still clung to its faded glories.

With a fine, subtile undercurrent of knowledge, Eleanor saw this,—saw but made no sign. If fate had been kinder, how she could enjoy such a friendship; and, measuring herself by this other woman, she is amazed at all the forces that have been busy with her nature, changing it so slowly but surely, until she feels that she has left far behind the bright, joyous, hopeful, gay girl who married Thomas Marshall, and not only that, but gave him her heart's love. She is frightened to think that the woman of to-day would not marry him even if he could go back to the old life, and become what he was then.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**"Experiments are for the vacillating, law is for the strong." — DR. DRAPER.**

THE full moon glorified the streets of Westwater, the last week in June, dimming the lights in store windows. What it did for the suburbs with the wealth of trees, the sweetness of great gardens, the picturesque aspect of grand old houses, or the points of beauty of the more modern ones with balconies and turrets and hanging windows, out of which a Juliet might have leaned, one had to see to appreciate. These old streets were filled with strollers; taking moonlight walks was quite a fashion.

Celia Marshall was in the back room, the table spread with her examination papers; the two younger children had gone to a kind of garden party given by their Sunday-school teacher; Mrs. Marshall sat in the little recess behind the cretonne curtain, busy as usual, devising something new for seaside hats, which were now being inquired for. Early in the week, few customers appeared in the evening. To-night the cream gardens and such places were full.

A shuffling step startled Eleanor, and she glanced up to see a man slowly entering the store. For a moment her heart stood still, then it gave a great bound. She rose and went out with a sad, cold dignity.

"Well, El'nor!"

Her quick glance took in her husband from head to foot. He was not in rags, but he had a slovenly, dirty appearance, missing a woman's untiring hand. He was thinner and there were hollows under his eyes. He had aged five years, it seemed to her, in these three months.

The lack of home comforts and regular living had begun to tell upon him, even in this brief space. He was not much in liquor, for an excellent reason,—he had no money.

"Well?" in a tone of clear inquiry, while she began to quiet her throbbing pulses.

There was a pause of awkward silence. A faint flush of shame rose to the husband's brow, then he mentally shook together the sort of brute courage with which a man braces up a known wrong.

"I've come back to you —" twisting his greasy coat lappel.

"The time of your probation has not expired. I said six months of soberness."

"See here, El'nor —" he came and leaned on the counter and dropped his voice, "this foolery's got to stop, you know. You had no right to turn me out of house and home —"

"If I remember," she interrupted, "it was Mrs. Beach. I found a shelter for myself and my children, when I saw that you were not likely to; but I *did* give you the opportunity. This is *my* home. During the past three months you have had a still better chance, for you have had no children to support. Have you made a home for me, for them?"

He winced under her clear, searching eyes. She was a strong antagonist, and he inwardly cursed her.

"Chance!" with a kind of a whining snuffle. "What sort of a chance has a man, I would like to know, when a wife goes off and leaves him and takes his children and everything? I have some rights, as you will find out. There's furniture here belonging to me, you are my wife, and here I stay. You'll find that I'm able to bluff your little game of divorce, and your fun with some other fellow."

"I told you there was to be no divorce, unless you compel me to take such a step; but I have invoked the

protection of the law thus far, — you have no right to enter this place, you have no claim upon my earnings.”

She drew a long, steady breath, which gave her a kind of mental bracing. Now that the interview she had feared so long had indeed come, she must meet it with resolution.

“We’ll see,” he returned with an oath.

“Will you go quietly away from here, or must I call help? When you claim anything, I want you to remember that the last articles bought with your money were left with you. The few I kept I had earned. Others were sold from time to time as our needs required. There is nothing here of yours.”

“My boy is here. Where is he? I shall see him,” and he started towards the door.

Eleanor placed herself in his way. “The child has gone to a little party. How much you care for him is evident from the fact that but for me he might starve, or have to find some asylum. Fortunately I can be protected in earning their bread. Oh, shame, that you their father, must needs make my mother’s duties harder!”

“Very fine sentiment, El’nor, very fine sentiment, but here I stick,” and he dropped into a chair. “No sense in a man’s wife rollin’ in luxury and he a beggar. Kate said so. Guy! There’s spunk for you!” with a retrospective chuckle.

A customer came in, and Eleanor waited upon her in a mood of desperation. What must she do? To rouse Tom to oaths and perhaps violence would be too terrible. A brawl on a public street this peaceful summer night!

She stepped into the other room. “Celia,” she said in a hurried whisper, “fly around to Mr. Bradford’s and beg them both to come at once. Your father is here, —” oh, poor child, she knew by the flush what a cruel stab it was. “Run out of the hall.”

She came back and took up some white lawn she was

shirring. What was in the man's mind as he looked upon the swift, slender fingers he had kissed so often? Nothing but a dull, stupid vacuity, a feeling that here was comfort and here he meant to stay. Kate said Eleanor had no right to turn him out of a home. His mother felt that she might have been a better wife. She had turned against him in his years of bad luck, and now she had gone off to make a lady of herself. She would see.

Neither spoke a word. Like a travesty, some scenes of their courtship came up before her. He had made himself the dull, sodden being he was, wilfully, selfishly. Suppose she had done the same thing? Was God a respecter of persons rather than principles, virtues, and actions?

Under any other circumstances the utter silence would have been dreadful. His head drooped sleepily, his lower lip hung down, displaying the even but neglected teeth. A silly, indolent, vapid expression lined every feature. What came into her mind with a sharp sense of humor—that God *had* made man upright, but he sought out many inventions; many, many soul-destroying ones. Then she wondered if God had bestowed enough strength upon Thomas Marshall to enable him to save himself from this horrible destruction! If not, whose fault was it? He had not been pushed down this blind, seething gulf; he had gone there deliberately, knowing better. She could not doubt God. She had not yet reached the point of despair where such a thing was possible, and her life had been too actively busy for abstruse speculations.

Mr. and Mrs. Bradford entered, and the gentleman gave a quick, inquiring glance. Eleanor rose and approached her husband.

"Tom," she said gently, as one sometimes does to a fractious child, "I am not alone and friendless, as you may have imagined. I ask you now to go quietly, since leave this place you must," and she gave a meaning glance toward the new comers.

"I won't," he replied doggedly.

She raised her voice a trifle this time, as she repeated her request.

Some confused thoughts had been struggling through his turgid brain. Here was the key to her sudden accession of fortune and independence. He rose and glared at the man, and then opened such a volley of vile language and accusation that Eleanor turned ashen pale, and swayed as if she would have fallen.

Mr. Bradford measured his antagonist with a sweep of the eye, and in another instant had swung him round by the collar, marched him through the store under the same impetus, and had him out on the sidewalk, nearly strangled.

"Stop your vile lies," he commanded in a deep, stern tone. "Not another word, or I will give you in charge of an officer, and if you are found here again, that will be your fate in any event. Come, no one is afraid of your drunken bluster."

He hurried him directly across the street, the better to distract any chance attention, and now turned him down a business street mostly shops and factories.

"She's my wife," whined Marshall in a choked voice.

"She is not your wife to be bullied and tormented when you are full of liquor. Don't you dare molest her again or you'll have a month or two in jail to consider what a fool you were. She has friends on the right hand and the left. Now go ; do you hear ?"

Marshall stood cowardly abject. Then, as Bradford turned, he cried : —

"Oh, for God's sake give me a quarter to get a night's lodging. It's awful hard lines for me !"

Bradford gave him the quarter in pitying disgust. He shamled along, still dizzy with the tremendous whirl, and a stomach empty of food that day. Two men coming between, he followed Marshall in their shade. It was as he

suspected. At the very first saloon he stopped for a glass of whiskey. Tom Marshall fallen so low as to beg of a stranger, with a common drunkard's lie in his mouth!

Bradford returned to the store. Mrs. Marshall had been weeping in Mrs. Bradford's arms, and the motherly woman was doing her best to soothe and tranquillize her, but the shame was bitter to bear.

"The policeman on this beat shall be warned," Mr. Bradford said decisively. "There must be no more such invasions. I am so glad you sent for us, my dear Mrs. Marshall."

"You are so kind." A great, dry sob tore its way up with a force that made her shudder. "But I meant — oh, if I knew whether he had any — any money. Where will he go!"

"Do not distress yourself; he is not worthy of the thought of a woman like you. He begged a quarter of me for a night's lodging, and I followed him far enough to see him spend it for rum. There is no use of even pitying such a man; and Thomas Marshall has the least excuse of any man I know."

Eleanor's face was scarlet. The last remnant of wifely love received its death-blow. Even the nightly prayers seemed a mockery after that.

Tom made another effort to be foiled by the guardian of the peace. His state was, indeed, at a low ebb. He worked a little, begged, tramped, and at last found himself at Long Branch, where he sent a letter to his mother, imploring her aid to help him out West, where he might begin a new life. Eleanor had turned him off completely, and the imprecations he called down upon her were horrible to the mother.

"There must be an end put to this," declared Mrs. Vanduyne, "or Tom will kill us both; but, perhaps, as well that as some shocking scandal with Eleanor. What a fool he was to marry that woman! Don't cry, mother;



I will think up something. It would never do to give him the money to go away, he would be sure to spend it for drink. If I could get a pass."

After two or three days, through which she managed to keep Tom out of sight, by providing him with a cheap boarding-place, her plans matured. She had a friend, a railroad magnate, to whom she confided part of her difficulty ; making Tom more sinned against than sinning, in the recital of his misfortunes. He was to be provided with a pass to St. Louis and a certain number of meals, but an extremely small allowance of pocket money. An employee going through was to have charge of him. There Kate would pay his board a month in advance, and, thus provided with a home, he must earn the rest himself.

Truth to tell, Tom Marshall made no demur, and was ready to start at once. There was no leave-taking between him and his mother. Katharine's was curt and cold.

"Tom," she said with her most impressive dignity, "never venture back to any of us unless you can come like a man. You are a shame and a disgrace to any family."

And so Thomas Marshall went his way. Four months had sufficed to wear out the patience of the sister, to chill the love of the mother. Were they not women with women's duties, as well as Eleanor?

Celia Marshall comforted her mother with a tender sweetness beyond her years. In truth, the burdens of womanhood had been early laid upon her. In comparison with Daisy, she seemed quite grown up. In strength, fervent love, and clear, high courage, she was her mother's friend. They came closely together this sad night, and never after drifted apart.

She passed a successful examination. In the autumn she would begin her three years' course at the high school. There was a secret pride in this, for she could not but see that it gave her position and a certain kind of power. And now she had time for her fascinating dream.

After Fourth of July, business was dull, but did not entirely cease. There were festivities where gay little garden hats were all the rage; there were people who had waited in the hope of getting much beauty for a small price; there were the tired mothers of families who had to put themselves off until the very last. Miss Parker took her six weeks' vacation up in the Catskills, where her brother was a farmer. The two other hands were dismissed for the present, and only the apprentice retained, who was given one or two days each week.

Celia had found that the sister of one of her school-mates gave lessons in painting. She began with water colors, flowers mostly, but soon indulged in bits of landscape at home. Now and then she took the children out for a holiday, and Mrs. Bradford carried Daisy off to her eldest daughter's for a week, where there was a delightful farm and three little tots that were a never-failing source of amusement.

About the middle of August Mrs. Marshall went over her business accounts. The summer stock had been pretty closely used, and not much remained on hand, except ribbons and laces. Their living had been conducted most economically, for she felt she had no right to indulge in luxuries until she was out of debt. She found after all expenses of business and living were deducted she had cleared nearly three hundred dollars, and exceeded her most sanguine hopes. Part of the balance of Mr. Howarth's loan she had not touched at all. She resolved now to return the five hundred dollars, pay her six months' interest, and keep the remainder for current expenses and fall buying.

She took her journey to New York, having apprised Mr. Howarth of her intentions.

"I think you are allowing yourself too small a margin," he said with a quiet smile, when he had listened to her

statement. "I should really like you to keep the money in case of an emergency."

"I do not feel like paying interest on more money than I positively need," she returned with quiet dignity; and the high, pure air indicated she could receive no favors.

He understood at once. "At least," with a touch of pleading in his voice, "you will remember that you can call upon me at any time. I am warmly interested in your success, you must feel assured."

"I do; you have proved a true and generous friend. I could not have gained this vantage ground alone, but I feel certain now, with health, to be able to rear my children in a walk of life that will not shame them nor their mother."

Ah, it would be doubly cruel to have one of them shame such a gracious and noble woman. And then he thought of the man who had dragged her to the very dust.

He would not question her, but he wrote to Mr. Darrow, who after a little search, found that Mr. Marshall had left the city.

"If he will only stay away," he mused, with something like a prayer.

September came in, filling the skies with gold and hazy reds, and the hillsides with tints of bronze and all the gradations of scarlet. The crisp winds, throbbing up from the sea, blew homeward the butterflies of fashion and the mothers of families, and the city was astir again with throngs of school children, young men whose ruddy faces bespoke exposure to sun and air, women who were many shades darker for their summer sojourn. The air was rife with hints of coming gayety. Several weddings were discussed, a new opera house was to be opened with one of the famous singers. Afternoon teas were coming in, and there was a general air of pleasure.

Mrs. Marshall took her place in the busy mart of labor with renewed courage. She would be able to make some-

thing more than a mere living. She liked the thought of a little breadth, of some leisure for reading with Celia, and becoming interested in all her pursuits. Daisy promised to have a beautiful voice, and betrayed an unusual aptness for music beside the eager love children often possess. The piano at Mrs. Bradford's was her delight.

"Oh, mamma, if she could only take lessons," exclaimed Celia earnestly. "It is such a comfort to do the thing you love, that fills your whole soul with longing."

"We will see another year;" and she put by the temptation for herself. Four years ago she had sold her piano; it was too costly an article for poor people to move about, and she had not succeeded very well with music scholars, and her new neighborhood, she felt, would go still more against her. But oh, how many times her secret soul had cried out for some solace in the life growing harder and more common every year.

Celia enjoyed her new class at school, and studied eagerly; but she dreamed of something beside, — of a life that should engage every heart-throb, every aim. Teaching might do, if she could gain no other point; but somewhere in life she would make a stand for herself, and try with such courage that it must bring success. Painting flower-pictures was well enough just now, but there were higher meanings for pencil and brush. They looked quite out of her reach, but why should they be? Did not patient endeavor cover many purposes in life?

Miss Parker was as bright, cheery, and inspiring as ever, and went at work with a wholesome zest. Orders multiplied. Mrs. Marshall was the style, undeniably. Perhaps one reason why she suited the richer classes so well was that she never duplicated anything especially pretty unless by request. If others copied, they could not attain the felicitous arrangement. She enjoyed her work so thoroughly. There was no wearisome spurring of compulsion. She did not dream of lost delights, of times

when she had ridden around in Aunt Wilder's carriage, a happy girl with every luxury.

In one way she was much relieved at her husband's continued absence, yet he was never wholly dismissed from her thoughts. The old love had perished, but it was succeeded by something like a mother's longing care. She did not want to see him, but she was hungry to hear. Was he sheltered from the cold these bitter nights? Was he famishing for want of food? When she saw some poor soul thinly clad, she sent up a prayer for him; when she gazed into a vapid, sodden, heavy-eyed face, she wondered; and it seemed at times as if she must go out and search for him. How could she endure years of suspense?

She could not have borne it if she had sat at home quietly eating out her heart. It is often woman's greatest misery that there is no active, entertaining work to do. And the drain upon her for the three busy months was so great that she really had not an idle moment, no time for morbid speculations, had she been so inclined.

The last of January most of her bills had come in, and she found great cause for exultation. If not on the high road to wealth, she should soon be out of debt, and that meant having something of her very own. Ah, how precious it was! She could quite understand a young man's pride in his first few hundred dollars.

She paid three hundred on her note. This time Mr. Howarth expressed much surprise.

"You must be a thriving business woman to make four hundred dollars over and above expenses the first year," he said in a tone of praise.

"Perhaps having been trained in the hard school of adversity, I have kept the expenses at a lower point;" and she smiled faintly, yet the light illumined her face. How different she looked from the shrinking, desperate heavy-hearted woman who came to him less than a year ago!

"The best part of wisdom in some respects. And yet," hesitatingly studying the face that he might not pain, "it hurts the idea of true womanhood to have it made cold and hard, deprived of all finer enjoyment and elevation. It is not well to narrow it too much. Money is not everything, my dear Mrs. Marshall."

"I am beginning to think that it *does* represent everything," but her noble smile gave a freer translation to her words. "I was reared with a great respect for it, as you well know. To my mind then it was the synonym of everything lovely; culture, society, ease, advancement, and that certain shaping of pure and noble lives. If,—" she checked herself with a sudden flash of scarlet; she was so used to going over the ground with herself that she forgot she was not thinking, holding those retrospective discussions with the girl Eleanor, and the woman of to-day. "If I had married a different kind of man," was in her mind, but she quickly crushed it out as disloyalty to her vows. "If we could elevate our pleasures instead of allowing them to weight us down with so much worldliness; but we do confuse our life purposes in so often striving after the mere glitter. When adversity came, I honestly took hold of it with a high aim and endeavor. I meant to convince myself at least that money was not all, but I felt conscious of a retrograde movement continually. With straightened means I kept giving up one and another of the fine-drawn essences of my very life, one may say, my mental life, and it does react upon the spiritual. Mr. Howarth," and her lovely cheek flushed again, "being a man, you cannot perhaps understand it; but the gracious culture and refinements of one circle seem like idle affectations in another. There were many things I had to lay aside with diamonds and velvets and elegant laces. Even if a withered rose keeps its fragrance, it has lost its beauty you know, and if you shake it out of your lovely linens and laces on the dusty highway, how long

would the fragrance last? One does have to relinquish much in extreme poverty, unless it be the poverty of a story heroine," and she smiled again. "I found that poverty for my children meant an utter lack of things sacred to me. They, you know, had no old haunts of remembrance to revivify them. Am I growing prosy? Well, without money I cannot make them what I should wish them to be, and I am willing to work hard for the money that presently I may lead them back to some kind of companionship with myself. They can never be rich. I have no wild ideas of making a fortune. But when I am out of debt and own the stock of my store, I shall be free for some indulgences and less prudent care. I suppose that is the way an honest business man would feel."

She had taken off her glove to sign the note, and had merely stood at the desk, — was standing now. He noted her graceful figure, the perfect slope of the shoulders, the proud poise of the head, the fine spirited face, and clear dark eyes. Her hand was fair and smooth. How he used to love to watch the slender fingers fly over the piano-keys like swallows in their magical circling! There was her wedding ring. He remembered, too, how extremely delicate and punctilious she had been in their interviews, never appealing to him with any little womanly weakness.

"Mrs. Marshall," he began in admiration, "you would make a splendid business *man*; I could almost wish you were one, that I might put a fortune in your way."

"You have put something better than mere fortune in my way," and her clear tone had a touch of tremulous emotion. "But I take your time unconscionably, which I believe business men seldom allow," and with a smile she turned.

"I always keep a little leisure for a friend," he returned, in a tone that was at once persuasive, yet with no

undue sentiment. "You have never told me about your children; I have none."

The lingering, regretful cadence of the words touched her.

"I have lost one little boy and have one remaining; my two elder ones are girls. To every mother I suppose her own are best, and my eldest has been my comfort through many sad and trying hours, my incentive," and a proud smile parted her lips. "She has just entered the high school, and it is my purpose to educate her for a teacher. My children will have to take their place in the ranks of labor."

"I hope some time to see them. Will you not bring them with you when you have a little leisure."

"You are very kind to extend your interest to them," she responded quietly. She would not make of them any bridge to cross over into his world.

"A noble woman," he said musingly, when she had gone. "Yes, there is a great deal in wealth, rightly used. I wonder if we ever realize how much of poverty as well as wealth is wrongly used. But one would like to see her rich, the head of a lovely home. If one could only put something in her way;" but such a feminine business as millinery was quite out of Mr. Howarth's line. And when he recalled some of the women in his circle who went almost wild with stock gambling and various devices to increase their capacity for extravagance, he felt thankful her lot was not cast in this dangerous whirl. He wrote again to Mr. Darrow to inquire if anything had been heard from Marshall, and how Mrs. Marshall was prospering in her business. He wanted to know more than the mere outside fact that she was getting rapidly out of debt. Perhaps some day it would not be a bad plan to call upon Darrow, and take a stroll about the place endeared to his young manhood.



## CHAPTER IX.

**"Blessed is he who has found his work ; let him ask no other blessedness."**

**—CARLYLE.**

THROUGH the two dull months Mrs. Marshall put into execution another project that had been in her mind before she even entertained the idea of so pretentious a business as Miss Caruth's. She was fond of embroidery, and extremely quick at it; and stamping for all kinds of fancy work was considered profitable. Celia, too, was greatly interested in this. Some patterns were obtained, and, after a little practice, Celia proved very expert at this branch. One window had its fancy corner. She had begun to paint on silks and satins, and for Christmas money had made quite a little store by covering cologne bottles, and on glove boxes and handkerchief cases.

"Mamma," she said gayly one day, "when I get to be a famous artist I shall look back on these things and call them 'pot-boilers,' as artists designate the work that has been done for the mere money to supply some urgent need; for I do not expect to keep to water-colors all my life. If it were not for school I should want to begin in oils at once."

Eleanor's heart gave a great, sudden throb. She had hardly looked upon Celia's fancy as a real genius. It was one thing to excel schoolgirls in the mere way of accomplishment, but quite another to be pitted against the world of correct knowledge and criticism. She glanced into the deep, ardent eyes; was there some subtle light beside that of youthful, daring hope?

"We will see what time brings," she answered softly.

She could not take in so great a possibility on her own judgment merely.

Circumstances were destined to make some change in all their lives. The tenant on the floor above them gave up the rooms; the old lady's health was failing, and one of her daughters insisted that she should relinquish the charge of housekeeping. If she dared to take them, if she felt free to add that much expense to her living! but with a sigh she turned from the temptation.

A week after the rooms had been offered to rent, her neighbor, the photographer, called in. A slight, delicate man, a trifle lame, and looking very young for his thirty years, Stephen Archer by name. Bertie had made quite an acquaintance with him, and they all knew him by sight.

"I have been longing for an excuse to call upon you, Mrs. Marshall," he began in a pleasant tone of voice. "Indeed, I believe I have two favors to ask, quite a tax on one's generosity."

"If favors were in my power," she returned a little doubtfully.

"One I know is. The other — well, I will take the most uncertain first. I should like to have two of the rooms on the next floor. Now, if you could join me in dividing them?" and he glanced at her most persuasively.

"You need two of them?" with slow inquiry.

"I will confess to you," and a faint flush rendered his pale face quite pretty. "I wish, I have resolved, indeed, to be married in the spring. The young lady who has been in my employ the last year has kindly consented to take me for life. We mean to start a very modest housekeeping at present, as most of our Sundays will be spent out of the city. There is a room on my floor that we can use for a kitchen, though we shall always take our dinner out. We should like the front room and the middle one. Now if you could make use of the third."

"I really should be glad to have it," she answered with much interest. Now that he was to be married there was no need of shutting him out so rigorously. For Celia's sake she had been extremely distant to young men who might venture in of an evening on some flimsy excuse. The thought of her being known as a pretty milliner girl was bitter indeed. "Of course you desire the front one?"

"Yes, we would like that unless you insisted upon it. We talked of it before we thought such an event possible. We will promise to be very quiet neighbors, and not annoy you; indeed, we are far too busy. My mother has a small place just out of town, on which my father left a considerable mortgage, and I have been trying to clear it, indeed, have nearly succeeded. We shall spend our Sundays there; and when business warrants such a step we shall reside there altogether. What is the old saying? 'Poverty is no disgrace, but mighty inconvenient.' I am in the list of those who suffer from its inconvenience."

There was something boyishly frank in his voice, and his blue-gray eyes had an honest, fearless look. Mrs. Marshall felt herself being won, interested, as one might be in a younger brother's plans.

"The list is not a small one," and she smiled.

"And when it comes to that, we are not in such bad company. Clean, ambitious, hopeful poverty, has wrested much from circumstances. Shall I go on with my confession? I have really wanted an excuse to drop in, you have had so many pretty devices. Pardon me if I say you possess the soul of a true artist. You can't have had time for the paintings surely, but the taste in selection is admirable."

"That part of it is in charge of my daughter who is yet in school. She has been studying a little —"

"You must make an artist of her."

"That will depend. But about the rooms —"

"Oh yes;" returning to the subject with a quiet grace, and discussing the terms. They soon reached an amicable division of the rent.

"My other favor is that you will allow me to photograph your little boy. I have watched him from the window as he plays, and I must concede that he puts himself in the most graceful positions, and looks like a sprite out of fairy-land; I fairly envy him: I never knew any such suppleness of limb, having been an invalid through my boyish years."

A fine touch of sympathy crossed Mrs. Marshall's face. Surely she could have no objection to that. And somehow the years of weakness and defeat brought him nearer.

"If I could pose children with the seductive ease and grace the child throws away on the least movement, my fortune would be made. Why do you suppose people are born dumb and helpless in the very points in which success seems possible, in the qualities they hunger and thirst after, and yet are doomed always to feel their own limitations, to suffer from them? Perhaps if my childhood had been different" — and his compressed lips held in them a secret pain. "I should never thwart a child's purpose or longing until I had tested it thoroughly."

"But you are an artist —" and she hesitated.

"A kind of blunderer on the very shore edge. I used to dream in my boyhood. My two brothers were well and strong, and took to the harder work of life. Both died. There were misfortunes in plenty, and my father was of the sternly practical sort; so the best compromise I could make was to be apprenticed to jewelry engraving. During a very dull season I dipped into photography, and began to color pictures. I have succeeded fairly well — but I bore you with this bit of personal history."

"No, no," she protested eagerly, while her bright face seemed to lure him on to further confidence.

"I convinced myself that my ardent desire would never be realized by any work that I could do in creative art. I can copy, I can photograph and finish thoroughly well; and isn't it brave Carlyle who advises a man, having found his work, to keep at it and find happiness therein?"

It was so long since anyone had quoted Carlyle to her. She gave him a rare, pleased smile.

"All the same, I have gone on studying. After I reach the degree of prosperity hinted at before, I shall feel free to indulge in some pleasures, without the high aims. But if one cannot pluck the rose, one may still enjoy rambling through the garden."

His spice of cheerful philosophy pleased her. Then she said, a little gravely: "I should be sorry to make a mistake about my daughter. Perhaps it would be better to do the work she can do well than attempt the kind that must bring dissatisfaction and disappointment. I had planned for her to be a teacher. She is an apt and thorough scholar."

"But surely there need be no haste in deciding?"

"No," and Mrs. Marshall drew a breath of relief. "This is her first year in the high school."

"When we come to know each other better I may perhaps suggest something. I hope we shall be good neighbors."

A customer interrupted the conversation. Mr. Archer lingered a moment, inspecting some painted satin panels, and then wished her a polite good evening.

Before the week ended he came in with his betrothed, a nice-looking, sensible girl, who had evidently made quite an ideal of him. It hardly seemed to Mrs. Marshall that she was Mr. Archer's equal in correct taste or intellect, yet if there must be a difference, was it not better on that side?

They made several neighborly arrangements, and the bride-elect ordered a wedding bonnet. The family would

go out early in March, and about the middle of the month the newly-married couple would come in.

Celia was delighted with the prospect.

"And we can really have a parlor," she exclaimed, joyously. "It does n't matter so very much when we are busy, which is nearly all the time, but if there did come a little leisure!"

"After this year we shall have some, I hope. I shall count on paying only one hundred dollars this coming six months, which will allow me a little to furnish with. And then we take the best our circumstances will allow."

They all went to see Mr. Archer married in church. The bride was one of quite a large family, plain, industrious, middle-class people; but she looked very winsome in her becoming bridal array. After a jaunt of a week they returned and began their furnishing. To the great delight of the Marshalls the new Mrs. Archer had a piano.

"I earned it all myself," she said proudly. "Mother had a fancy that I ought to leave it for the other girls; but Mr. Archer is so fond of music, and I said let two of them join and buy one. Dora, my second sister, is teaching school, and gets four hundred a year now, and my eldest sister makes ten dollars a week. I don't think it was selfish of me."

"We do not always stop to think of justice," returned Mrs. Marshall, "when the vision of another person's generosity is so captivating to us."

She began to feel quite motherly towards these young people in their new estate, struggling to provide for the future and practising little economies. Bertie was a wonderful source of interest to Mr. Archer, who photographed him in fancy costumes, and made almost everything of him. Mrs. Archer was fascinated with Daisy, and insisted upon giving her music lessons. Mr. Archer talked art to Celia, and opened rich stores before the wondering, recep-

tive mind. In turn he was surprised by her ready intuition and originality, the wonderful grouping of figures and harmonies of color.

"I want you to see a friend of mine in town here, a Mr. Paul Thierry," he said. "He is a man of much elegance and culture, a very fine portrait painter, and has done some noteworthy work beside. While his verdicts are true, they are always kindly as well. I am almost certain he would say you could not make a beginning too soon."

"And if he said she had better not begin at all?" inquired the mother.

"I am quite positive he will not say that. Mrs. Marshall, why are you so doubtful? Why should not every woman, as well as every man, be trained to give their highest and best to the world. Celia is a born artist. It needs careful training and much hard work to excel; for while there is so much meretricious and second-rate art work, the true standard is kept high. I am confident that she will succeed."

Mrs. Marshall sighed softly. It seemed quite too dream-like. She could not settle to such a roseate view. She put off the plans from time to time, then Mr. Thierry left the city for a few weeks, business came on with such a rush, and Celia was much engrossed with another examination. The child waited with a curious, tender patience.

"You'll have to go now," announced Mr. Archer one evening. "I saw Thierry to-day and he asked me to bring you. He laughed a little at first about girl geniuses, but I know I interested him. I took that card you gave Marian, with the wet bee crawling out of the water to sun himself on the bit of golden-rod, and he said it was really well done. He's about as chary of his praise as you are, Mrs. Marshall; but he thinks Celia ought to have some first-class lessons if she is going to work at all."

Celia shrank from the ordeal. She and Daisy went with Mr. Archer to Mr. Thierry's studio, a pretty little addi-

tion built at one side of his tasteful home, while he shared a larger one in New York with a friend. And the artist was not as formidable as the child's idea of him. A man of about forty, of medium height and rather stout, a clear, soft complexion, with curling light-brown hair, quite thin on the top, and positively merry eyes. He wore a long bronze beard, which added a dignity to his face and air.

Two ladies were sitting in one end of the studio, which was a perfect gem in arrangement. Celia paused on the threshold. Out of an engraving, she had never seen anything so lovely. The room was long, with an inlaid floor and soft rugs — something bright tone with a tawny hue, here the dull rich colors of Eastern handiwork, there a white wolf rug, over in the corner a tiger skin with claws and head. The front window was large, with stained glass bordering and diamonded panes — you could see where one silken curtain was pulled carelessly aside. Easels standing here and there, some rich and quaintly carved, a great wide fireplace, with tiling and red bricks, and the chimney-piece with stores of bric-a-brac going up to the ceiling. A curious sort of cabinet table, easy chairs, and one supreme Elizabethan, a bright Mexican hammock swung across one of the back corners, and here another large French window, half open, on a great porch, where clustering vines filtered a most exquisite light of opalescent green.

Celia could have stood there forever. One of the ladies rose, and she glanced at her. It was Mrs. Van Cleve, who made a gentle inclination of the head. Mrs. Thierry turned toward her with a bright look of inquiry, then both passed out of the lower door.

"What a simply pretty girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Thierry. "She looks as if she might have just stepped out of some quaint old English picture. How refreshing after scores and hundreds of girls of the period. Do you know, I wonder why girls do not vary their styles, and not always



present an exact copy of each other's clothes. Who is this sweet Saint Agnes?"

Mrs. Van Cleve smiled. "A Miss Celia Marshall."

"Not — not the milliner's daughter."

"The very same."

"Oh," and a nod concluded that subject.

Celia, meanwhile, after the introduction and the first embarrassment was over, turned to a picture that interested her, while Mr. Thierry held a little compassionate aside with Archer. Then he began to talk to vivacious Daisy, who had a frank, but not unpleasant way of making dainty comments, and expressing opinions with a kind of worldly-wise air that sat charmingly upon her, and presently drew Celia into the conversation. Some curiosities were explained, some engravings glanced over, and by degrees they came to the pictures. She could talk readily enough to Mr. Archer, but now she was as shy as some fair spring snowdrop. If she displayed no self-assertion, her eyes were eloquent with the passion of her soul. There was no need of repression here, no call to check girlish vanity, but rather to draw out and encourage, and Mr. Thierry could do that to a charm, — polished man of the world that he was.

Presently she grew quite at ease. He could read the deep, earnest, eloquent eyes, the color that came and went, the eager tremulousness of the clear-cut lips, when words were left unsaid. If hers were not the dower of beauty, and even that might be possible in womanhood, she would always have the something better, the fair, serene loveliness of a pure soul.

"I want you to come again," he said cordially at parting. "There are many things here it would interest you to look over, and it is a great step to get one's self accustomed to correct ideas of art. I think it would be well to begin with lessons in your vacation. I could give you half a dozen myself, at intervals. I am glad you have not

painted in oils, for you have nothing to unlearn, and Archer here will tell you how troublesome a thing that is."

Celia expressed her thanks with the reposeful grace of fine breeding. The visit had been a revelation to her. If she had dreamed of art before, now a passionate longing entered and took possession of her whole soul. "This is my true heritage," she thought, "even if circumstances had forever barred me out of it. I should have found it in heaven."

"There is going to be a true artist," exclaimed Paul Thierry, entering his wife's quaint reception room. "Ten years from this you will see pictures with C. M. in the corner, and people will be wondering about them. I am not often enthusiastic about young ladies, but this is a simple, pure-minded child, transfused with a love and given the power to translate it, just as she has the patience for the training. I did not at all believe in Archer's judgment, but I must give him praise for rightly discriminating this time."

"Mrs. Marshall's daughter?" inquired Mrs. Van Cleve with a slight, indescribable accent.

"Yes. Hasn't there been some sort of story about the mother — a bad husband or something?"

Mrs. Thierry glanced at Mrs. Van Cleve. "I never trouble my head about such things," she said, with a faint touch of disdain. "It is enough for me to know that she makes the prettiest bonnets in town."

There had been a little struggle in Mrs. Van Cleve's soul. She was very pure and high and serene, and held her way regally in her own ranks in life. To be taken up by Mrs. Van Cleve would ensure a reception anywhere, indeed not a few of her friends waited breathlessly for her opinions on certain subjects before venturing to decide for themselves. Yet there was something truer than mere

conventionalism in her. It spoke now, in the silvery voice and refined intonation.

"The mother, I think, must be a genius, and a courageous woman to take the step she did. She is Mrs. Mountjoy's cousin, and Mrs. Vanduyne's sister-in-law. They were very wealthy at one time; but in losing his fortune, Mr. Marshall seemed to lose his manliness, and became extremely dissipated. He has left his family—on what terms I do not know. She is certainly a lady."

"Mrs. Mountjoy's cousin! The Wilders' niece! I should think they would provide for her in a different manner."

"Think how you would admire a man's pluck, Flo, if, when he was worsted in the battle of life, he 'up and fought again,' like the brave knight in your song. Has courage, endurance, and high resolve any sex? Is the masculine right, and to be praised; and the feminine wrong, and to be blamed?"

"You are such an intense radical, Paul," but her smile was tenderly sweet.

"You women never stand by women, while men always keep that good comradeship. And upon my word I do believe one half of the women are better worth standing by."

"Men do not appreciate these nice questions of social usage. You cannot ask your milliner to dinner to meet the elegant Mrs. Blank. Bonnets are not subjects of discussion at an æsthetic meal, though they may be of great moment in your dressing-room."

"According to Mrs. Van Cleve, Mrs. Marshall might do credit to a drawing-room, since, doubtless, she has played the hostess there. What is she like, Mrs. Van Cleve? Does the daughter resemble her?"

"The daughter is a star to her full moon. I do not know what she may be presently, but Mrs. Marshall is a lady in every sense but one, and in that I am inclined to hold her a kind of queen. Few women could step from

affluence to poverty and business, and not lose the lovely dignity of womanhood. I regret that she had to do it."

"But — her place is fixed," said Mrs. Thierry with a certain decisiveness. "And Paul, I hope you will not spoil another good milliner with injudicious interest."

"I believe her mother does n't design her for a milliner," Thierry said drily. "She is being educated for a school teacher."

"Well, teaching is very respectable," and Mrs. Thierry yawned as she waved her perfumed fan.

The artist paced slowly up and down the velvet carpet. He was not a Bohemian if he was a radical, and a rather fastidious one at that. Poverty, it was his belief, looked much more picturesque in a picture than out of it, for there you escaped the smells of grease and dirt, onions, tobacco, and beer. Of course the Marshalls had never been really poor. How odd that Mrs. Mountjoy should be sitting to him now for a portrait! He did the same thing with his portraits that Mrs. Marshall did with her bonnets, — put everybody at their best estate, and was a favorite, even at a high price. Archer rather raved about this Mrs. Marshall, and Thierry wondered if he could not manage a call. The girl certainly was the incarnation of strength and purity. There were no weak lines in her face, young as it was. He wondered why it should interest him so much.

He arranged his call with a plausible errand to Archer's one evening, and they went down into the store. Somehow Archer thought Mrs. Marshall looked more regal there by the contrast, though she never struck him as being out of place. She raised the work to herself, to her own gracious dignity. You *could* fancy her a queen, even as she waited upon a customer.

Celia showed charmingly this evening. She did not feel at all afraid of Mr. Thierry. She even brought out her work for his inspection, though he confessed archly

that the conventional pieces were very excellent for hiding genius. "They are a sort of trade's union law, and make all work about equal." Then he picked up a card. "Why," he continued, "here is a perfect pattern of a white panel Mrs. Van Cleve has in her library. The cross is of purple violets, and if the maker had perfumed them they would be real."

Celia laughed with a dainty, delicate ring.

"What amuses you so in that?"

She told him of her first Easter in the store, her successes, and the assurance that had come to her then. "And I shall paint some pictures if it takes me years to get at them, and no one is found to buy them in the end," she said, with the decision of true genius, "though I do want to make art remunerative if it is possible."

"It will be possible for you. You are very young, and there is much hard work before you, puzzling, wearing brain-work. We artists find a wide discrepancy between our exquisite ideals, nourished with the rapt and passionate essence of the brain, and the bungling work our fingers perform. But there is a good deal in learning to do it rightly at the outset, in training one's brain to distinguish between the possible and the impossible, the reality and the splendid dream. I had to have some of the vagaries knocked out of me," and he laughed.

"I want to succeed so very much that I shall try to dream only within bounds," she answered.

While Thierry talked to the daughter he studied the mother. Her grace and dignity might have come from the finest culture, yet he really doubted if it did. Was it not something with which she defended herself, like a circle of fine spear-points, from the intrusion of people less delicate and high bred. He had remarked in Celia such a purity of accent, such a repose of manner, instead of the ordinary restlessness of youth. It did not render her older, but gave her that inexpressible quaintness

which presently would be so fascinating; for he doubted if she would ever reach the commanding elegance of her mother. What sort of a man could have left such a wife! Yet the surroundings here, that might have reduced some other woman to commonness, served to exalt her.

"You will consider yourself engaged for two lessons a week," he said, turning to Celia. "Tuesday and Thursday mornings, from nine to ten. Archer, can you not spare us an easel in one of the dens upstairs, and if Miss Marshall should prove refractory I can call upon your wife."

Mrs. Marshall raised her eyes and met those of the artist. His said, "I should care for your child as if she were a princess of royal blood," and hers thanked him.

"O mamma, may I?" and Celia drew a long, quivering breath, while her luminous eyes entreated as well.

"I shall remain at home during July, that will make eight lessons; then for the next two months I shall be jaunting round, and Archer here will overlook you a little. I shall not expect you to make rapid progress, but to get well grounded in some of the rules of art."

Mrs. Marshall assented. The two gentlemen took polite leave.

"O mamma," and Celia's arms were around her mother's neck, while her breath came in a long sigh like the sob of a summer wind, "did you ever feel that it was glorious to be alive, and to be able to do just the kind of work in this world that you wanted to do, that filled your whole soul?"

## CHAPTER X.

"No receipt comforteth the heart like a true friend."

MRS. MARSHALL received a note one morning that Mr. Howarth would be abroad for the ensuing three months on account of his wife's health. The hundred dollars that she had intended to pay she put aside in the bank. Business had proved extremely satisfactory. The stamping and fancy-work department had been turned over to Celia, who desired in this manner to earn enough for her own art education. Indeed, she had received some quite profitable orders.

Her lessons with Mr. Thierry were no child's play. It was true, as he said, she had very little to unlearn, and her eye was a marvel of correctness. Always on hand promptly, she was simply the docile and painstaking pupil. Mrs. Archer flitted in and out; sometimes Stephen sat and watched them. The month came to an end all too soon.

Mrs. Marshall kept one of the girls through August, and took some little jaunts to country places about with her two younger children. Bertie grew in stature and in the wonderful *bonhommie* that had characterized his father's early years. He took rapid fancies, and was a favorite with the worst little street Arab up to the most elegant gentleman who happened to be attracted by his bright face and his peculiarly winsome voice, that had in it the certain breeziness of hill-tops and summer richness. A volatile nature, looking on every side for pleasure, and not being particularly choice, so that he was ministered to; tender and generous when it came in his way, but

rarely going out of his way; wailing with disappointment when any delight had to be relinquished, and in five minutes settling to a new one; a charming disposition in many points for a child, but what would it be for a man! She used to admire this gay gladness in her lover; had he the other side even then?

Daisy was vivacious rather than volatile, with much perseverance for what she loved, and an extreme dislike to what she did not love. She would tend in the store, run an errand gladly, and never wearied of music; but her school tasks were irksome, her house duties a trial. "When we *do* get rich enough to keep a servant," was her continual wail. She evinced much more ignoble pride than Celia. The mother could see how, years hence, if she should come into any good fortune, she would shrink from the very remembrance of these years of toil. She was not unduly ambitious for her children, but she felt she ought to consider their individual fitness for the sphere in which she placed them, that there should be as little restless and unhappy friction as possible. Daisy had a full, clear soprano voice, with considerable compass. Already she was in request for childish entertainments. Instrumental music she acquired rapidly. The cost of a musical education would be quite a drain, yet it would be wiser to spend it on her children now than to give them some future elegance. They could not aspire to her old position, but they might command a vantage ground of their own. Daisy would make no kind of a business woman; Celia would do much better, and yet she felt confident that the fair girl would reach the place to which she aspired. Daisy would go gladly with some one's help.

The breach between her and her relatives had not been healed. Mrs. Vanduyne passed her loftily. Mrs. Marshall's fragile face glanced out of the Vanduyne carriage with a curious, longing denial. When they spoke of poor



Tom, it was to be inferred that all his misfortunes were traceable to his wife. How much this angered Mrs. Wilder and Mrs. Mountjoy, no one ever knew. If they sometimes spoke warmly, it was for the sake of the family standing, not because they desired to defend her. They, too, treated her with silent disdain, and would have gone half over the world for an article rather than apply to her. But she had many excellent customers among the *élite* of Westwater. To be sure, she was to them simply a milliner with exquisite taste. But she made many warm friends. They all had to seek her out, to visit her. With a few exceptions she returned no calls, but she made those who came so charmingly welcome that they longed to come again.

This year was destined to make some changes. The Archers were to go to Roselle, as the suburb was called, now fast becoming quite a pretentious place. Mr. Archer's business had increased in a most encouraging manner. He was henceforth to keep a man employed, while Mrs. Archer took upon herself household duties, since her mother-in-law was quite broken in health. This left the two rooms vacant, and Mrs. Marshall felt that now she could afford a real home.

She gathered her two hundred dollars together shortly after the advent of the new year, and journeyed to Mr. Howarth's office, hardly able to resist the motherly temptation of taking her darling Celia. But she had kept this matter a strict secret, further than that Celia knew she had the money of an old friend who had known both parents in their earlier years. It was better, she thought, if any question should arise in after time, that they should remain in ignorance of any name. With a proud and happy heart she started. She could draw a long, free breath, and indulge in sundry home comforts so long rigorously denied.

Mr. Howarth's foreign trip, though it was all on Eng-

lish sea coasts, had improved him greatly. A noble physique always impresses one the more favorably. A Sir Galahad must not be wanting in size and strength, and yet how many generous and ample bodies hold an infinitesimal soul!

"I hardly know whether to welcome you or not," he said with his cordial smile, as he took her hand. "Your joy at a sense of release from obligation reminds me that I no longer have it in my power to befriend you in any manner that you will accept."

"You are mistaken in one side of your argument," and the light frost of reserve left her face illumined with a lovely expression of gratitude. "If I should come to misfortune again there is no one to whom I could apply with such perfect frankness and ease; nay, more," and his soul thanked her for the words, "there is no one to whom I could apply at all. You are the one friend to whom I should come, sure of being unquestioned or of being doubted, and confident of the truest faith. I want you to know that you have saved me and mine from the exactions of bitter, grinding poverty, of shame and disgrace. I cannot place my children back in the social scale where my youth was passed, but it may perhaps please you to know that in the next lower round they may attain to something above what their mother's necessities aspired to. My eldest girl has evinced much genius in an artistic line, my second has the soul of music and an unusually promising voice. I have no object in life but to advance them. And my boy —"

"Perhaps I can assist you again, here," he exclaimed quickly.

"It will be years first," — she smiled with the sweet graciousness of acceptance. "He is but nine, and there are years of study and training before him. But if I might bring him to you when he needs the older, wiser, more manly guidance —"

"It is a promise," he rejoined. "I will do for him in this matter as I would for a son of my own. Mrs. Marshall, — is it not possible? — I should be glad to have you know Mrs. Howarth," hurriedly. "You would find a friend in her, I am sure. Our house is open to" — "you and yours," he was about to say, but she stopped him with an entreating gesture of her hand.

"No, no," she cried, her secret soul wrung with a pang. "Men do not, cannot understand. There are a hundred little differences, pin-pricks up to swift, cruel, rapier thrusts. Let me keep in my own place; let me remember your kindness with no regrets. It stands out so clear and comforting that I cannot mar it by any inadvertence."

How could he let this lovely woman go out of his life, — the life in which she should have been enfolded and kept from harm; the life that he should have made one long summer day; the children he would have loved and caressed, and been proud of with a father's noble pride; the wife he could have loved in all integrity and honor. He saw it like some radiant vision; he knew now all that would be forever lost out of both lives.

"I cannot mar it by any inadvertence!" The words rang through his brain like the last strains of music to Sir Galahad. Oh, noble, knightly soul shrined in woman's form, how had she missed the higher work she might do.

He took her hand and bowed over it in deepest reverence.

"You are right," he said, with a delicate impression of something in his voice that might suggest regret for the deprivation, but not for the principle underlying it. "And you will remember that in any stress of fate or fortune I am your unalterable friend."

She walked down the street with her firm, free carriage, yet her heart was seething within her. Of the many things she had forgiven in Thomas Marshall, sins of omis-

sion and commission, she found this the hardest, — to be thrust out of her birthright, with no chance of regaining it; to have a curious, nameless impression attached to her, that would always bind her hand and foot. For many minutes she almost resolved to fly to the law for freedom; to, at least, partially right herself in the eyes of the world. Then the tempest subsided and left her weak and cold. Celia wondered why she should be so grave on her return.

Daisy and Celia enjoyed planning the new order of things. The front-room was to be parlor *par excellence*. One corner of the back-room was to be curtained off with various devices for Bertie's sleeping chamber, and the rest Celia was to have for a studio. Down stairs they would use the middle room for a kind of evening parlor.

"And all we want to make it complete is a piano and a servant," declared Daisy. "I hate to confess to the girls at school that we do our own work. Almost everybody has a Bridget."

"I should not discuss my home-living with girls at school," said Celia gravely, "There are plenty of other subjects."

"But when they ask you, and when they are telling of all the trouble their mothers have," pursued Daisy in an aggrieved tone. "The servant at Mary Carson's came home so dreadfully drunk, mamma —"

"Hush!" her mother commanded. "We can be glad that we have nothing so wretched and disagreeable. And, Daisy, you must learn a little wisdom. No well-bred or refined girl will gossip about her family affairs; the great lesson of life is to extract happiness from the surroundings you have. There are much harder trials than doing without a servant."

Celia's painting lessons had gone on once a week in Mr. Archer's little den, but she was glad to have a place of her very own to indulge in dreams and fancies. How

impatient she felt of school and its tasks, no one, not even her mother, guessed. Her self-restraint was strong and steady. She looked at the long years to come when she should confine herself mostly to her art, when she could indulge in the passionate devotion that permeated and thrilled every fibre of her being. She studied her mother's wants and wishes; there was a most exquisite sympathy between them. This one precious love would be the mother's solace if all else failed.

Paul Thierry used to watch them with a peculiar interest. They were so like and yet unlike. The same firm, high, resolute denial of self, the courage, the subtle sweetness. They seemed never to be out of temper, as if, indeed, they respected their own individuality too truly to lower it to any base use. Yet with the most perfect and thorough appreciation of art, Mrs. Marshall lacked the divine inspiration. Celia it was who flushed and trembled, whose soul was suffused with an inward sense, a passionate worship, that spoke in keener accent and deeper, fuller tone, and that subtile, delicate, irradiation of the eye. He loved to watch her, to answer her unspoken questions. Mrs. Marshall wondered a little why he, an artist of note, should choose to spend his time upon so young a pupil; but as little would she have understood his deeper delight, as the overwhelming passion itself, — a lovely gem serene that he meant presently to flash upon the world. But how could he manage it? No nun ever kept closer to cloister shelter than she to her mother's side. And why should not the mother have her chance again? Must she suffer continually for a man's brutal selfishness and its results.

He was pacing Mrs. Van Cleve's pretty library one evening, as she sat half reclining on a sofa. His wife had proposed meeting him here as he came up from the city, and he was rather early, she somewhat late; so the two had fallen into one of the discussions that Mrs. Thierry

always pronounced endless. This had been some nice point of social ethics.

"I wonder how much courage you women really have," he had said in a bantering tone. "You are all so afraid of stepping beyond a certain line that tradition has marked out for you, your mothers, and grandmothers, centuries ago. So you let the Philistines and the fast people come in and possess the ground, while you are lifted above common humanity in some serene conjunction of wealth, refinement, culture, and a high polish that disdains ordinary uses and using. Do you really fear contamination?"

"My dear Paul, what is all this tirade about?" She rises a trifle, and the firelight makes a tender radiance like a halo about her face. Then she smiles a little; it is such a calm, gracious smile. These two people—indeed the Van Cleves and the Thierrys—are like brothers and sisters, and they pair off with each other. Mr. Van Cleve is very proud, and fond of the pretty aristocratic Mrs. Thierry, whose strongly conservative ideas so chime in with his own; while Paul's speculations, that fail to interest his wife, amuse and entertain Mrs. Van Cleve exceedingly. They sometimes hit a latent spark of philanthropy in her own soul, and there is a quick, answering flash.

Then too, her brother, Percival Chantrey, who had grown up in the larger world,—a man's world,—leaned suspiciously towards Thierry's side. Thierry wished he were at home now instead of being off at St. Petersburg, studying up Nihilism. He could give him a pleasanter subject.

"It is a tirade? Pardon me," but his tone had a tint of vexation in it.

"You accuse us of generalizing too much, of being impracticable. I feel like using one of Percival's words, 'specify.' Specify this particular wrong, and I shall know just where to begin my defence, for I suppose I am to defend?"

"How odd! I was thinking of Percy, too. Is he never coming home again?"

"He will be home this summer. Meanwhile, —"

"Oh, it is nothing very new. Well, yes, here is an illustration close at hand. What person in *our* set would open his or her drawing-room doors to Mrs. Marshall? Here is a woman who has not come up from the ranks, but who has been thrust down by a weak, rascally husband. Yet all you women say, 'keep her down, keep her down.' Her white hands have been soiled by labor, her queenly carriage has shadowed a store counter, she has discussed ribbons and laces, not in the large, æsthetic view, but with a question of profit, and with an eye to the maintenance of her children. You punish her for her husband's sins. And see here, if Marshall could return with a fortune, which I grant is impossible, and was to enter society again under his sister's auspices, the world would gracefully condone his sin, but would it ever forgive his wife for no sin at all? That is where men are broader after all. Our hero worship is more for work, we have less tender sentiment for sin."

"Oh, you are unfair, Paul," and her tone rises a trifle, while a flush stains her cheek. "I never could tolerate such a man as Thomas Marshall must be, though his sister is undeniably elegant, and his mother one of the loveliest of old ladies. Of course I cannot judge of the merits of the case; you know we lived in Washington when I was first married, and then went abroad. Meanwhile, she had fallen out of society. I don't think I ever knew rightly what did happen. Mrs. Vanduyne blames her greatly, and puts her present position down to love of notoriety, but I have never remarked any of that in her. Neither is she shrinking or timid. Shall I confess to you that she always reminds me of an intrepid soldier, too brave ever to be foolhardy. And, *sub rosa*, I like her."

"You do, really!" He came closer and looked in the calm, clear eyes that did not waver, but rather smiled.

"Yes, you need not have gone so fiercely at me."

"No, I ought not, for you are gentle loveliness personified, and sometimes strong truth."

"Never falsehood, I hope. I do try to keep my soul clean and clear."

"No, for when you cannot speak honorably you keep silent. Now, liking her, knowing her to be a refined and cultured gentlewoman,—I like that old term,—why do you not ask her to your house?"

"Whom shall I ask to meet her? Answer me that, wise, generous-hearted Paul."

He laughed with a scornful flavor, then he said: "You could ask me. When Percy comes home you can ask him. And we two might find a third. Isn't it a shame that noble souls should be so scarce in the world?"

She sat up straight and resolute now. "Paul," she asked quietly, "do you go there much?"

"Well, I have dropped in several evenings with Archer. I give Miss Celia a lesson every Saturday morning in Archer's coloring room, with one or two people present."

"O Paul, be careful!" and an expression almost of distress crossed her face.

"O Paul, I mean to be very careful," and his tone was so exact an imitation of hers that both laughed.

"You do not realize —"

"Yes, I *do* realize. Owen Meredith was not the first one who discovered,—

'A woman is too slight a thing  
To trample the world without feeling its sting.'

but if I were indifferent to remark, she would not be. I never saw a daughter more carefully guarded than Celia, and never one so willing to be guarded. It seems an intuitive perception on both sides. And Mrs. Marshall has



the fine pride of — I can't liken her to anyone but yourself. You two women ought to be perfect friends. I do not believe you have a sister with whom you could be in such entire sympathy. I want to tell you; I gave Celia eight lessons last July. I did not mean to charge for them, for, after all, they were mere preliminaries. She found out from Mrs. Archer that my terms were three dollars a lesson, and on the last day she came up stairs with that lovely, gracious interest, you could not have done it better yourself, and said in an ordinary cordial tone, 'Mr. Thierry, as you are going away, I prefer to pay you for Celia's lessons now,' and placed twenty-four dollars in my hand, her eyes shining with that proud, fearless consciousness of perfect right, perfect honor, that I could no more have refused it than to have uttered a profane word in her presence. I wrote out a bill and receipted it, and she thanked me for all my trouble. Then I said, 'When I return, Mrs. Marshall, I shall be glad to resume the lessons every Saturday morning. Your daughter is so promising a pupil that my terms to her will be twenty-four dollars for twelve lessons.' Celia glanced up so entreatingly that her mother consented. They talk with their eyes, and both have lovely orbs, Mrs. Marshall's are much the darker. I can't imagine a man being even rude to such a woman, for, like the wedding guest, she would 'hold him with her eye.' I know what you mean, that a woman separated from her husband is more an object of suspicion and censure, but no true gentleman would ever place her in an equivocal position. But how funny things are in this world! Here I can drop in and talk to you by the hours."

"But the world knows I am a happy wife," she answered proudly.

"And it punishes Mrs. Marshall by suspicion because she has been an unhappy wife. Zounds! what sort of a fellow could Marshall have been. I hear that he hung on

her for years, doing nothing but just drink rum and lounge about. Faugh! the very thought is disgraceful. And do you suppose a woman of her stamp would not better enjoy a clean, purified atmosphere in her home than the poisonous breath of a sot?"

"It must have been terrible for her!" and Mrs. Van Cleve covered her face with her hands to shut out the awful vision.

"And now, here is my dilemma. The girl *is* a genius, pure and simple. She has the truth, the vim, the perseverance of a high, sweet soul, and she must have a chance. Somewhere society *shall* be compelled to open its doors, if I have to present her myself in New York. But I wish some other high, sweet soul would take up both her and her mother. There need be no hurry."

Mrs. Van Cleve was silent some minutes, then she said: "Paul, let me make a confession. I like her very much, as I have said. I could ask her here to visit *me*, but — do not laugh — her high, fine, intangible pride holds me, Anastasia Van Cleve, at arm's length, I have never had the courage; I have never found an opportunity. It is my most mortifying defeat."

"Oh, peerless woman! to acknowledge that your milliner 'shines you down.' If I were that hardened criminal, a bank defaulter, and she my wife, I should pack my satchel and go off without a good-by. I never could look her in the face. Ah, there comes Marguerite, bringing you a houseful of company, her excuse for being so late."

They crossed to the exquisite drawing-room, and were soon in full tide of conversation with half a dozen friends who had gathered incidentally at the Thierrys'. Mrs. Van Cleve ordered a dainty supper, which the guests enlivened with wit and merriment. She found a moment to say to the artist, —

"I shall really try, but I am not sanguine of success."

Mrs. Van Cleve kept her word. One dull day in February she dismounted from her carriage and walked leisurely into the store, taking a seat. Mrs. Marshall left her little workroom and came out with a cordial smile. A bit of lace to match was the ostensible errand.

Mrs. Marshall looked over the box. "It is Venice point," she said, in her clear, low tone, "and I am much afraid the last of it went into Miss Lily Fairchild's wedding trousseau. It is some we have had on hand quite a while."

Mrs. Van Cleve had purchased it of Miss Caruth, but she did not consider the avowal necessary.

"I might match it for you, possibly."

"No, I will not trouble you ; I can select some new."

"Our stock of choice laces has been thinned out latterly. Lace is so much in vogue again, and nothing can be more beautiful for some women."

"Then you make a distinction !" and Mrs. Van Cleve smiled.

"Perhaps it is a fancy of mine, but frail, lovely laces always seem to belong to delicate, high-bred women. Certain kinds of Spanish best adorn a brilliant coquette, with large languishing eyes. Malta looks so pure, so chaste, yet withal brave, and tinged with romance, and seems appropriate for a nun-like girl."

"What kind shall I wear ?" Mrs. Van Cleve glanced up with an expression that brought a flush to the quiet, restrained face, then she placed her white hand, sparkling with one costly diamond, on Mrs. Marshall's. "Can we not make friends over this suggestive lace ?" and her voice had a peculiarly sweet intonation. "I think even the love for lace might be a point of assimilation, and I am sure there are many others, if we will both frankly admit them to ourselves."

Mrs. Marshall took the hand in hers, more used to everyday purposes, yet not less true or trusty. But she stood

quite still. Did some glowing possibility flash over her and fade?

"I think we might be friends," Mrs. Van Cleve continued in her quiet tone. "May not some of the pleasure gone out of your life be brought back into it —"

"Not the pleasures,"—in an even tone, that betrayed the latent firmness. "Life has changed too much."

"Surely, you are not required to shut out everything?"

"No; I have my children and their welfare, their love to guard and keep, their lives to shape. My dear Mrs. Van Cleve,"—and her voice trembled with a vague tenderness,— "how generous this is in you, and how truly I thank you, I shall not attempt to put into words. But our ways lie so far apart —"

"Can you not come over into the sunshine of mine occasionally, and may not the shade of yours temper the too vivid brightness? Losses may happen to all of us, — I wonder if I could bear them as bravely as you. I fear not."

"God grant that you may never be tried," she breathed fervently.

"But — must the way be made more barren?"

Mrs. Marshall glanced up with her brave, sweet look, though tears gleamed in her lovely deep eyes.

"I respect the gulf," she returned. "We may rail at society's arbitrary rules and usages, but a woman in my position has no right to accept a friendship such as you would honor me with. I have no time to render myself gracious and entertaining. The mornings you spend over new books, music, pictures, and all the delightful sources that enrich your mind and make you companionable, I must devote to toil. The ease, the lovely luxuriance that shapes and adds a hundred charms cannot be mine, so I must stand at a disadvantage. And you know that, although you may feel willing to receive me, you could not present me to your friends. My position

bans me out. I shall not struggle uselessly against the stream and bear witness to my own defeat, but hold by my safe covert on the shore, and gather the few treasures within my reach."

"But you might come to me some quiet evening when I sent the carriage."

"Do not send, please. I should be sorry to give you the slightest pain, believe me. I am too busy at present to enjoy idleness. Oh, if there should come a time when I could accept your generous proffer, will you not trust me to do so? Meanwhile—I have nothing to offer you!" she cried despairingly.

"You have all that I have asked."

"Let me think it over. I cannot promise now. And oh, believe me, you are unwise to risk the strictures of society. I am different from other merely poor women. I am in a shadow that cannot be lifted. Why should I darken any other life?"

"But you will not darken mine."

"Oh, friend, do not make me pain you with cruel persistence," she entreated.

"No, I will not," and Mrs. Van Cleve rose. "I think you know now that if you were in want of a friend you could come to me in any perplexity, any sorrow."

"Thank God for such knowledge," Mrs. Marshall said, with tremulous devoutness.

Mrs. Van Cleve went her way. She would gain in time, and Paul Thierry had said there was no haste. Then she remembered with dismay that she could not even ask the artist to meet Mrs. Marshall at her house. Society had bound her about with bands after all, and this one was Mrs. Thierry's prejudice.

The dull day ended with a snow-storm that continued the next twenty-four hours, when the sky cleared faultlessly. To Westwater it brought a perfect carnival of gayety. The streets and avenues were filled with sleighs

of every description, and all night, even, was heard the merry echoing bells and the gay voices of revellers.

The afternoon of the second day brought Mrs. Van Cleve's handsome sleigh, with its robes and its spirited horses. The driver fastened them a moment and went in with a note for Mrs. Marshall, in which she so delicately placed the equipage at her disposal, begging that, as a pleasure to herself, the children and their mother would accept it for the remainder of the afternoon. It would be ungracious to refuse, and yet Mrs. Marshall dreaded to venture into the old world of enchantment. Twice she read the note before she could resolve to consent.

The children were wild with joy. Celia and Daisy occupied one seat, Mrs. Marshall and Bertie the other. Daisy leaned back as if born to the purple. Celia studied the brilliant panorama with intense interest, and Bertie longed to be beside the driver.

How vividly this recalled the old, glad youth to Mrs. Marshall. Up and down the streets she had skimmed with lover and husband, a happy care-free girl, a proud and satisfied woman. Here were old companions with their daughters at their side. Could time have flown so fast? Some stared at her in a curious way, as if not at all certain who she might be, others passed her by with perfect indifference, and a few nodded. Once there was a little halt. An elegant sleigh coming up contained Mrs. Mountjoy and her two daughters, both a little older than Mrs. Marshall's, and a son, the eldest of the flock.

"That never was Aunt Eleanor!" exclaimed Violet.

"Mrs. Marshall, if you please," corrected her mother.

"Well, if we do not mean to have her any relation, why could n't we go there for our bonnets? The Brocklehurst girls have the prettiest hats and bonnets of anyone I know; and she's handsome herself."

"I never was so astonished," declared Mrs. Mountjoy to her mother the next day. "It was wretched taste for

Eleanor to make herself so conspicuous with her whole tribe. The boy looks wonderfully like Tom, but the girls are very plain. You do not suppose Mrs. Van Cleve means to take them up, do you? She never can do such an ill-bred thing."

"I should think not. The Van Cleves and the Chantreys have always been so very fastidious, and the people who go there really would not notice Eleanor. Of course it would be too ridiculous to meet your own milliner. I dare say the children have all begged for a sleigh-ride, and Mrs. Van Cleve can afford to do an eccentric kindness. But Eleanor will get mightily snubbed if she attempts to foist herself upon society. They say she is doing very well, — making money. I would like to know who was foolish enough to lend her six hundred dollars in the first instance."

"Well, I do hope she will keep herself and her children within bounds, though Daisy sung at some festivals and was fulsomely praised, and it is said Celia is being educated for a teacher. She had better set them both at making bonnets if it is so profitable. I only wish they could retire quite out of Westwater."

## CHAPTER XI.

"All true work is sacred. In all true work there is something of divineness." — CARLYLE.

At the end of three years Eleanor Marshall felt that success and prosperity greater than she had dared to dream of had crowned her desperate effort. Without some pecuniary aid she could not have accomplished so much, she well knew, and her heart swelled with gratitude to the one noble friend, who had not only responded to her call, but with rare delicacy shielded her from any embarrassment. How could she ever show her pure regard? Even between them there was the inevitable gulf of social usage and propriety. Some other woman might accept from him a brother's tenderness and regard, — she could not.

This year, though free from debt, had been full of strenuous effort. Her furnishing, albeit simple, was rarely pretty, but another question had demanded much consideration, — the groundwork of Daisy's future life. The child's voice grew stronger and richer; it would never be that of a *prima donna*, but it might be made of service in some of the less ambitious rounds, as church singing, and perhaps teaching. Music she studied with a relish; other tasks were hardships. She had already made such progress that to give up now would be a sacrifice, so the piano was added in great part through the insistence of Mrs. Archer, and Daisy began her life work in earnest. No one ever had to suggest practising to her. Often amid scales and exercises she would break out into some forbidden waltz or galop that would shake out a storm of melody.



"I must have a little breathing space," she would say laughingly when chidden.

She was growing tall rapidly, and would inherit the fine grace of her mother in more rapid, dazzling combinations. Her hazel eyes always laughed, not boldly, but with a certain piquant indifference that verged to coquetry. Her soft, peachy complexion, her vivid color that came and went, and the mobile, ever-changing mouth with its ready smiles, gave her all the frank and seductive allurements of youth, and a something that might pass for beauty presently, though her features lacked the pure regularity of Celia's. Indeed not one of them was purely pretty; it was the bewitching combination that dazzled.

She had been made twice happy, the second blessing the advent of a small handmaiden, who could run of errands, wash dishes, and do numerous small, distasteful things that had fallen to her share. Daisy Marshall would never glorify labor in any manner, and only do it upon compulsion. She was tender and affectionate, would be won to tears in a moment, but the capability of heroic self-sacrifice, such as seemed to be ingrained in Celia, was quite lacking.

Business had been exceedingly prosperous. Mrs. Marshall used to wonder sometimes at the lavishness with which women ordered costly laces; plumes that seemed fit for a monarch's diadem; flowers that vied with eastern gardens in richness, and needed but fragrance to make them real; yards of delicate ribbons to be worn a few times, soiled, and thrown aside. There appeared no lack of money for personal adornment. She did not quarrel with this, but she sometimes glanced at the other side and thought of the poor women who toiled daily for a mere pittance. All the plainer part of labor seemed to be ground down to the lowest point of remuneration; that which appealed to personal adornment, to show, to self, was seldom haggled over; in fact, with her reputa-

tion, she found very little trouble. True at first some few had complained of bills and fancied there must be a mistake, but they seldom did it a second time.

She felt now that the drain upon her would be less severe. She might even, in the course of years, come to save up a little money. Celia's industry had provided wholly for her own art work, but the mother felt that after she had graduated there must be a respite from such arduous labor; yet it did not appear to have worn her. The higher love had brought patience and strength, and now that all thought of teaching was given up, she did not strain every nerve in this respect.

The "entering wedge," as the artist termed it, had brought about some small results. Celia had gone to Mrs. Van Cleve's and been enchanted, but Mrs. Marshall had held aloof from reasons that she could not fully analyze, even to herself. She had *not* the leisure to enjoy it; this was one of the cruel exactions of poverty and business. An hour snatched now and then, a plunge amid the roses of the old life, would bear a pang of pain rather than pleasure. Then, too, Mrs. Van Cleve had been away most of the winter. She had gone to Cuba with a sister in delicate health, spent a month or two in New Orleans, and then met a delightful party of Thierry's selecting in Florida.

For the last six weeks Celia had been painting alone, embodying a thought that had shaped itself in her brain and grown to be a tender actuality, pleasing herself, as she said.

"Well, gentlefolk," said a bright voice one evening, and Paul Thierry marched through into the sitting-room. It was nearing nine o'clock, and lessons as well as sewing had been laid aside. Bertie was asleep on the lounge, looking like a rosy Cupid; Celia sat leaning her arm on her mother's knee; Daisy was upstairs improvising "wild and wondrous" melodies.

"Oh — Mr. Thierry!" Celia rose and gave him her hand. She was seventeen now, not as tall as her mother, in fact she looked smaller by the contrast. The proud poise of the head here seemed to carry with it the exalted Greek unconsciousness rather than the fine, fearless dignity of her mother; but she had the steadfast persistence, the innate purity. The fine dividing line was the greater intellectual force, the spiritual loveliness, the fervor of an inward sight richly endowed. In society's world the mother would still "shine the daughter down," but Thierry understood the subtle charm she possessed. Yet, given them all as free agents, on an equality, and he would have loved the mother first.

"Yes, home again, and delighted to be here, though work has piled up mountains high in my absence. It would be a positive insult to ask if you are well. Mrs. Marshall, how comes it that you never seem worked out or fagged out? You always bring to mind an old poem that was in one of my early reading-books, which had no real merit that I remember, — only an exceeding freshness in the first line, —

'The rose had been washed, lately washed in a shower,'

and when I read it, I could always smell the freshness of the rose."

"I have been enjoying a rather lazy time these two dull months," and she smiled. "It will doubtless surprise you that I have found time to pick up some of my old music, and actually paint a handful of flowers, to Celia's great amusement."

"And what has Celia been doing?"

"I am so glad you have come," she began eagerly, "I have painted a picture — you told me I might exercise myself in composition, and now that I have done it, I am afraid the subject is too hackneyed."

"But the treatment is not," interposed Mrs. Marshall.

"Fair penitent, I wonder if I shall be able to shrive you," and he laughed. "Is it roses, or lilacs, or a ruined mill?"

"Neither." There was such a demure prettiness in her eyes that for an instant she seemed almost coquettish.

"It must be quite original if I have not guessed it in three guesses. You have roused my curiosity. Is it presentable?"

"Let us go up stairs, mamma," Celia proposed; and they wended their way thither.

"I have been pleasing myself," commenced Celia. "It has been a kind of rest from the harder duties and realistic views. I have not decided whether to offer it for criticism, any more than one would bring out a dream to be shorn of all its fanciful concomitants."

A panel of medium size stood on the easel. Thierry placed the lamp on a little side table where the light would fall properly upon it. A winding bit of stream leading to a background of meadow-land in a roseate haze that appeared at the first glance as sunrise, but on second view you discerned a shape, a faint yet perfect figure of a young girl, whose golden tresses fell far below her waist and were filleted with some dainty woodland blooms gathered from their mossy beds. One arm held clustering grasses and growths of earliest spring; with the other she was scattering trailing arbutus. The glimpse of meadow lay in the suggestive tints that indicated rather than declared the advent of the season. At her feet the rill sparkled over a few pebbly stones; but at every half inch of space it grew colder, and out in the foreground beside the leafless shrubbery in brown and gray stems, the stones with their dried moss, there were fragments of thin, shelly ice. In a wavering diagonal across the corner on the brownish turf she had written, in fine antique lettering, the legend, —

"The spring comes slowly up this way."

Thierry studied it in amaze. The delicate coloring, the

soft, suggestive, tender, yet positive life she had managed to throw into it, the perfect perspective, the distance from the gleam of ice to the coming greenness of the meadow, with its slow, lovely gradations, was wonderful. You waited for spring to come, in a kind of hushed, breathless way ; you could feel the tender promise, the richness of the scattered arbutus blooms.

"You certainly have done your teacher great credit," he said, more moved than he cared to show. "Who is it says there are not any new things or ideas in the world — it is only our freshly dressing up the old ones? You certainly have attired your legend with both freshness and beauty. I must see it by daylight. Celia, will you sell this?"

"Oh, Mr. Thierry, you are going to buy it out of pure generosity, or else induce Mrs. Van Cleve to do so. What if I — refuse!" with a little timid archness that had in it a suggestion of Daisy.

"You have missed in both suspicions, Miss Marshall;" and he laughed lightly for the sense of relief it afforded him, while he bowed low in mock deference. "I was thinking of a perfect stranger, — to you at least, — a man who makes nothing of running over to Paris to look at half a dozen new pictures whenever he lists. If you will empower me to offer it —"

"Oh, I am afraid," with a pathetic little cry. "Mr. Thierry, mamma and I both feel that it is better to wait until I can do something really worthy, than accept a kindly but not genuine and lasting appreciation. It is to be life-work, you know," with a gesture of high humility. "It is not anything undertaken from girlish vanity for the mere praise of to-day. Sometimes I fear you have been too indulgent."

"I shall be strict enough in the future to compensate for it all. You will find me turning positively savage in my criticisms, presently. My dear child," and his tone dropped from the bantering humor to one of fervent tenderness,

"if I did not think you had the soul of a true artist, and the capabilities of an honest, painstaking, efficient worker, I should not encourage you to go on. The world is crowded now with half-fledged artists who starve. Even your simplest work has been well done — I will give you that credit. You have succeeded here beyond any dream of mine. I want you to take up art boldly as a profession, and to do that you must have a standing-place. I think I can dispose of this picture so that it will not only remunerate you, but bring you just this opportunity."

She turned her eyes full upon him with that wonderful childlike directness, the apotheosis of perfect faith, and they thanked him as no mere words could have done.

"And now let me see Daisy in her kingdom, and I must say good-night. I ran away from Mrs. Van Cleve's, where my wife is spending the evening. I will be in again to-morrow morning."

Daisy played him a gay little rondeau that broke the tense strain of the interview, and the artist went away in his olden insouciant manner.

"We had better not talk about it to-night," wisely said Mrs. Marshall. "Any great hope is almost as wearing as a great sorrow."

"Oh no, mamma, there is the joy."

"Yes, if you are sure the joy will come."

The artist reappeared the next morning and studied Celia's picture critically. There were a few crude points that demanded finer work, a little false coloring, but its strength and tone surprised him.

"I shall be in on Saturday, when I want her to finish it," he said to Mrs. Marshall, as he left her on his way to the city.

Celia could hardly guess at the impatience he restrained. He fancied he had found a clue that would conduct her out of the social labyrinth that required such nice treading.

After turning his study from order to disorder and back again, rendering himself dissatisfied with half a dozen attempts begun before the Florida excursion, putting himself out of humor with a sitter, a thing Paul Thierry rarely allowed himself to do, he turned away from it all in disgust, went to Delmonico's for a lunch, and then sauntered down town, bowing on the right hand and the left to gracious nods from pretty women, rather red and cold in the deceptive April wind and sunshine.

Quite down Broadway a friend leaned out of a coupé with a cordial nod and smile. Thierry signalled him with a slight gesture of the hand. The other reined up to the sidewalk.

"Will you not get in?" he asked. "It is early yet, and Mrs. Thierry will forgive you if you do not keep dinner waiting."

"I was about to beg you to take me up. To tell the truth, Howarth, I have been thinking of you until I am crosser than the proverbial two sticks."

"I was not aware that I had such an utterly demoralizing influence upon my friends. Have you been gambling in stocks, Thierry, against my advice, and feel yourself a guilty man?"

Thierry laughed, his own mellow, genuine laugh.

"A wrong guess. I am not that deeply-dyed criminal. It was only that I wanted to see you about an interesting matter, and I was afraid I might 'dim the grace' by undue impatience. Whether to capture you by a grand *coup d'état*, or to amble up gently, tickle your vanity, pat your good taste and discernment, and lead you gradually up to a point of commitment —"

"What may this dread conspiracy be? You see I am forewarned now," and a gleam of humor shone in his eyes.

"Seriously, my dear friend, I want your help. The first step, I will admit, is for you to purchase a picture."

"One of your own?"

"Oh, I am not in the market this time," with an incisive sort of smile. "But — I have a *protégée*, a pupil, — let me confess my crime in its fullest enormity, — a young girl who will make her mark on something more than shifting sand, since it is my care to see that she isn't pushed quite off solid ground. She has painted a picture that will capture the hearts of two women; one is Anastasia Van Cleve, the other Mrs. Howarth. For various reasons I incline to Mrs. Howarth."

"Ah!" Howarth's eyes studied his friend tentatively for a moment.

"You know, of course," continued Thierry, with a serious air, "that I should n't offer you or her any mere daub. This is a painting of such unusual excellence in a new beginner, that five years hence you will feel proud of owning the first of her work that was really offered for sale. If it were not for her advancement I should take it myself, and double my money on it in the course of time."

"What is it?" asked Howarth.

"A panel of medium size. As to the subject, I might spoil it by a description. I should have waited and brought it to you; and it was between the Scylla of delay and the Charybdis of impatience that I lost my serenity. I was going home to put myself out of temptation's way, when I met you. Being the very omen I wanted, I accepted it. Ah, you need not fancy that I have some sentimental young lady who only works for pastime — I am not in the habit of fathering such, and I should not foist them upon you, in any event."

"Pardon my incredulity, if indeed I expressed that. Consider your picture purchased. Am I allowed to inquire the price beforehand?"

Thierry mused a moment. "Seventy-five dollars," he returned, with something of a business air.

"Seventy-five? Why not make it an even hundred if you want to encourage your friend?"



"My friend is too clear-eyed not to apprehend generosity. I should be willing to give that for the picture myself. As I said, it is something more than merely buying a picture. I want to interest Mrs. Howarth in her."

"Does she reside at Westwater?"

"She is one of the girls who has a story, or rather is shadowed by her mother's story; one of the bravest, purest, and best women I know. Unfortunately, she has been compelled to care for a family, to enter business; and why it should ban a woman out of so much I cannot see. But in Westwater, lines are closely drawn, and social distinctions hard to overcome. This girl is of good birth, and how proud we are of that in our republican land!" — with a touch of irony. "By one of the hard twists of fate they were reduced from affluence to poverty; the husband lacked the courage and manliness to strike out again with a determined will, so the wife has done it. She is educating her children nobly. Now, when we praise a man for such an effort, why do we not think it admirable in a woman?"

"I have always maintained that it was," and sincerity spoke in his tone.

"And the daughter is a genius. She had painted some before I knew her, girl's work, but she had made it very good training. Archer brought her to me, and I knew then her level, serene eyes were artist's eyes, formed to translate hidden meanings. I was not mistaken. I have given her lessons. As I have said, I want her to have a secure standing-place. If it were a young fellow I should take him to some artist reunion and introduce him, talk him up at the club, exhibit his picture, and if he at all resembled her, he could work out the remainder of the problem himself; or if it were some other girl, I should take her at once to Valerie Adrian and let her win her way through those Bohemian ranks, that, after all, have

shaped up many capital people; or, if my lovely goddess were not so hedged about with aristocratic tendencies and beliefs and fancies, I should introduce her at home. Mrs. Van Cleve would do it, but in Westwater it would fall far short of the desired purpose. If you could see her, Howarth; if you could know the mother!"

A curious fancy was struggling through the listener's brain. Surely if it were Eleanor's child she would not have kept so sweet a knowledge from his sympathy and interest.

"What is the name?" he asked with all the indifference he could assume. "I spent the years of my young manhood in Westwater, and knew many of its residents."

"Marshall; they are very well connected people. Howarth, *do* you know them?" for a gleam of unwonted interest in the other's face betrayed him.

"I know an Eleanor Marshall," — he could not bring himself to call her by her husband's name. "She was married while I resided in Westwater —"

"Did you know her husband? You may not have heard that he was a miserable, drunken wretch in later years, and that she left him. One cannot decide the merits of such a case unless one has known both parties, it is commonly supposed; but a man is more easily won to the feminine side. Perhaps he understands what a brute beast rum can make of a man, better than the women who pity him for his weakness, and relegate all the virtues and duties to his wife. Mrs. Marshall has made herself a success in a business way, and is educating her children admirably. Socially she is — well, if she asked bread of society, the cultured and elegant society in which she is fitted to shine, I am afraid the stone would be given with no great gentleness. She doesn't ask it. She has refused Mrs. Van Cleve's overtures as only a high and fine woman can refuse. Heaven knows, I for one wish that fate had been kinder to her. I am sorry such a

woman was compelled to take this step. We talk a great deal about the dignity of labor, of glorifying our work, and all that, but womanhood seems best glorified with silken gowns and helpless lily hands, guiltless of labor. We have enlarged upon the decalogue until, for woman, the whole week is taken in. There are some very noble theories about it, but in practice it amounts to just that. So you see my little heroine is shadowed by the noblest mother in the world, doing her duty nobly. Why should the daughter of a milliner be a genius? Let her make bonnets, not paint pictures. Let her keep in her proper sphere."

"But — the world is wider outside of Westwater."

"Truly it is," with a humorously ironical smile. "If it were not, the millennium would be set back a million or so years."

"And — what would you like to have me do?"

"Buy the picture and hang it in your house. Thank heaven Mrs. Howarth will not be afraid. Some time you can tell her the story. Celia Marshall is but seventeen, and it shall go hard indeed with me, if I cannot outwit circumstances in the next five years. Or suppose you come over some day, — let me see — next week, and see for yourself."

Some indication of a feeling unconfessed shadowed Howarth's face for an instant. Then he spoke in a tone so curiously calm that it roused Thierry's attention. Had there been a romance years ago? Was he bespeaking interest for a child who might have been Howarth's very own?

"I should like to see your little artist," Howarth answered slowly, "but I would rather take the picture first. Will you have the check to-day?"

"No, not until I deliver it, which may not even be next week, but as soon as possible."

"Here," he said, reining up before the handsome and

substantial brown-stone residence, "you will come in to dinner?"

"Indeed I cannot. Thanks for the kindness;" and Thierry would have sprung out, but his host restrained him.

"Let me send you down to the ferry," he exclaimed; "and remember that the picture is to come as soon as possible. I am curious to see it. You will find me any morning at my office."

The driver took his seat, and the artist whirled away in a musing mood. Leonard Howarth walked slowly up to his dressing-room. How deeply he had been wounded, even Eleanor never wholly knew; for when he might have told the story the sting was past. Had she so little confidence in him that she could better trust a stranger with her child? — a fascinating man too, but, thank heaven, an honorable one. And that this man should bespeak his interest for the child, when he would so freely and gladly have given it to the mother!

Thierry spent nearly all of Saturday morning with Celia. The picture was given its finishing touches, and his keen eyes saw all the faint blemishes that one less thoroughly trained might have missed. Celia worked with the most charming patience. He said nothing about its sale until it was finished, and then only in an incidental business way, as if it were a sort of probability.

But he took it to New York as he had promised. Howarth had been impatiently awaiting him.

He, too, was struck by the rare strength and simplicity of the treatment. The soul of the artist spoke through it, and impressed the beholder with a finer emotion and admiration than mere material art. Surely there should be a brilliant future for such a genius.

"Thierry, I ought to make it a hundred," he exclaimed, much moved by the touching tenderness in every line.

The artist's eyes sparkled. "No," he returned; "she

will think that a kind of generosity. You can have no idea of the high, fine pride actuating both her and her mother. Five years from this you may send in your order at any price."

Leonard Howarth wrote both names on the cheque in his firm, elegant hand. "Celia Marshall." And he was her first patron. If he could see her face when she received this.

"Is she like her mother?" he asked. "I remember her mother very well in her first womanhood."

"She will never be so magnificent, and yet Mrs. Marshall could no more have painted that picture than she could have created a world. But Celia — ah, well, you must see the quaint, nun-like face."

## CHAPTER XII.

"No shame to remember, no wish to forget." — MISS MULOCK.

"THERE is no after-victory so sweet as the first. There is no money like that from one's earliest effort. Miss Marshall, accept my congratulations. Your picture is sold. There is the cheque!"

Paul Thierry laid it down on the table before her. Mrs. Marshall came and glanced at it with motherly pride. Celia uttered a cry of joy, but Mrs. Marshall's face was a vivid scarlet.

"Then you, too, know him — Mr. Howarth?" She struggled to regain her composure, but her voice was unsteady.

"I have been most happy to number Leonard Howarth among my friends for the last seven years. His is a strong, pure, manly soul. The picture is to be a gift to his wife, who is hardly less lovely than Mrs. Van Cleve. Celia, you have fallen into good hands."

She felt the manner was to cover her agitation. What did he think of it? A pang of pure anguish pierced her soul. She could not afford to have any man mistake her.

"But the kindness, the real generosity, was yours. What could I have achieved without your patient training —"

"But if there had been nothing to train?" and he laughed. "And back of it all we must thank Stephen Archer for first discerning what manner of soul you possessed."

"But you are quite sure that — that I am not overpaid? I told you I did not want benevolence."

"My dear girl, rest your anxious little soul. I asked seventy-five; I could have had one hundred for it after he saw it. And now — not another word upon art until you are through with this bothersome graduating; and then I want you to begin in grand earnest. Ah, you will learn then what hard work really means."

She glanced up with eloquent, tearful eyes.

As he was moving through the store, Mrs. Marshall uttered his name in a low tone, and he turned.

"I want to make a brief explanation," she began hurriedly. "Did you know when you took Celia's picture to Mr. Howarth—" and she colored again, drawing a fluttering breath.

"I was not aware that you were friends until after he had negotiated for it. The name roused his attention. But you could have — no woman could have a worthier friend."

"I knew him in my girlhood — through my engagement," and the color fluttered warily again. "For years I had not seen him, but now and then I heard whispers of his manliness, his generous kindness to people in distress. When Miss Caruth's offer came to me, after an ineffectual effort I went — to him —"

"Oh," Thierry cried, moved inexpressibly, "do not tell me this, since it pains you —"

"It does not pain me; I want you to know. The money with which I started in this new life I had from him. There might have been some other way, but I could not find it, and it was a matter of life and death to me then. He lent it to me as a man might to another man, and I repaid the grandest debt of my life thankfully, proudly. It saved me and my children from a cruel fate that yawned before us. It has helped Celia to find her true vocation. Oh, Mr. Thierry, you cannot know, for I think you have never been there, all the bitter limitations of poverty. You may make sacrifices for yourself, but to

offer the sweet, innocent souls of your children to the crushing, devouring Moloch, to see them grow hard and common before your eyes, compelled to minister to the miserable weakness of one who has lost all regard for them! His kindness helped me to rescue them. Judge, then, how much gratitude I owe him. That is the bond between us. And, since you have unconsciously added to it, let me say in all truth there is no one to whom I would so soon owe another favor save to yourself."

The fine, calm eyes were passion-pure. Never in that old time had she loved this man, Thierry felt, no matter what sentiment might have actuated him then.

"More than a year ago the obligation ceased. Since then I have not seen him. If you think it best, for Celia's sake, will you say that I am ready to welcome any friend, but—I am not a free woman—" she stood up proud and straight before him, her brow marble clear. "Having saved my children from one evil, I have no right to bring another upon them."

"Yes, I understand." He took her slender fingers in his with a respect that thrilled her. "For Celia's sake I am glad to count him her friend."

She stood looking after him when he had gone, but seeing only vacancy, and thinking how strange it was that fate should have sent Mr. Howarth into her child's life when she had held back for very fear.

Thierry walked briskly down the street, pondering the strange tangle as well. Howarth's money had helped her to complicate her life, and yet, what would it have been without the assistance? How odd that he had stumbled upon this very point!

Celia's joy was too delicious an emotion to dampen. Up to this time Mrs. Marshall had allowed herself to be disturbed by fears of an over-sanguine verdict. In her wider knowledge of the world she knew the struggle that lay before Celia, the hard fight it would be to win back the



lost vantage-ground. Yet she had the boundless hope of youth that believes all things possible, while the mother had gathered much sad lore by experience.

Paul Thierry puzzled his brains a long while to plan how a meeting could be brought about with no embarrassment to any party. That Mrs. Marshall was *not* a free woman, that she had a peculiar position to sustain in the eyes of the world, complicated it.

Mrs. Howarth cut the Gordian knot, innocent of any secret intent in it. Thierry met her at an art reception, where he was wandering around forlornly. The Van Cleves had some interruption at the last moment. Mrs. Thierry declared she was too tired to take doses of art conversation. The artist was to meet some committee, so he went off grumbling,—quite an unusual temper for him.

Mrs. Howarth put out her hand as she sat in an easy-chair, a little fatigued from exertion.

"Oh, how glad I am to see you," he said. "I began to think my familiars had mostly disappeared. There are so many new faces to-night, and so many old ones have been turned country-ward or mountain-ward."

"Sit down here," and she motioned to a chair. "Mr. Howarth is showing about two very æsthetic young ladies, strangers in the city. And I want to thank you for the lovely surprise you placed in his way. How well you knew what would suit me! I felt complimented to think that you considered the rightful owner of such a picture should be Stacy Van Cleve or myself. And Mr. Howarth said you would relate the romance points of the story. The artist is your pupil and very young; and he knew her mother long ago, he tells me. But all the remainder I was to extract from you, and you know you are always stumbling over romantic people."

"Am I? Howarth insists that one half my swans are geese! I wish I could interest you in her behalf;" and he glanced wistfully at the lady.

"I am interested already. Does that mean that you want me to take her up? Shall I give her a reception?"

"I wonder if you would have the courage to?"

"Does it require courage? Is n't she presentable?"

"She is a very lovely young girl. I do not mean with merely a pretty face, but her figure is exquisitely graceful, her air quaint and serious, her voice low and trained, her manners refined, her intelligence quite up to the average. I am not sure but she has some accomplishments."

"What are the defects? though I cannot see that you have left room for any."

"Poverty for one."

"But how does she come by all these charms and graces?" There was an amused light in Mrs. Howarth's eye.

"Her mother is a lady."

"Well, poverty is an accident that befalls many of us. There are changes of that kind going on continually. And now about the father?"

"Her father is worse than dead; indeed, the only hope about him is that he may be dead. For three years or more the mother has made her way, with her children to care for. The crime society will bring against her is, that she is a business woman."

"Paul Thierry! As if we were not all outgrowing that! What an absurd idea for you to advance!"

"Are we outgrowing it? I am not so sure. Certain kinds of accomplishments are allowed the privilege of coining money, if they can with no detriment to social position. We talk a great deal about making labor respected, but we do shrink a little from respecting the laborer. He seems a useful piece of machinery that we can admire as one of the parts of a grand theory, but we like best to poise him at a distance. And a woman is made to feel the disadvantages more keenly. You are not always remembering that an elegant and cultivated man

of present luxury was once engaged in some inferior employment."

"But — allow me to offset this with one question — are your people of inferior employment always cultured and refined? That they often do succeed to wealth I admit."

"We will premise that they had all at first, as the mother of my little artist unquestionably did. Then comes bravely borne misfortune. Instead of sinking down and drifting about in search of the proper vantage ground, she took hold with a firm grasp of the work that came in her way, and succeeded."

"And that was? —"

"Millinery!"

Mrs. Howarth's level brows rose the least trifle unconsciously.

"She had the taste, the genius for that. She has made a home and is educating her children. But I am well aware that as a prima donna, a literary woman, or even an artist, it would have enhanced her social value. This is what I complain of, and it seems to be the weak point of the woman and the industrial questions."

"How does Mrs. Thierry take it?"

"Ah, you know that Mrs. Thierry is a born aristocrat, and that I pay my price for superior civilization" — he gave the merest elevation to his shoulders, and a light, humorous smile crossed his face. "Mrs. Marshall makes Mrs. Thierry look so transcendently lovely in new bonnets that I go near to ruining myself in order to be the more deeply captivated. But to Mrs. Thierry the stain of labor on white hands is the unpardonable sin — as bad as Lady Macbeth's; and the perfumes of the whole Orient cannot wash it out."

"I wonder you and Marguerite never quarrel," she said, with a peculiar smile.

"Does a man go out and hale his heliotrope bed that it has not borne him Jacqueminot roses? I have a fondness

for heliotrope, and it looks natural growing on its own slender green stem. Fancy it on the stalk of a sunflower."

"So you want me to take up this pretty young artist and place her on a higher round than she can reach herself?"

"She *can* reach it alone, in the course of time. Still, life is too short to waste years in climbing the steep hill of success and resting between every step, as one must, if there are no other ways. I am heterodox enough to believe that one enjoys many things with the fresh zest of newly awakened appetite, but after hunger has ceased, and weariness taken its place, the keen relish has gone. There is a little scorn in the tone, that says, 'You might have saved me yesterday; to-day I scarcely care for the salvation,—I have pitted myself against fate.' I would place her at once in art circles and let her fight her way —"

Mrs. Howarth's face asked a question.

"Because," he went on, "it would be too cruel to make her fight. Ten years from this it would not matter so much. And—I do not want her to wait. If I were not sure of her success I should hesitate; or if I were a woman," and he laughed, "I could do it myself, but my pearl among girls must not have the bloom rubbed rudely away by a tint of scandal. See her, my dear friend. You and Stacy Van Cleve can surely manage it, and then, if you like her not, I shall say no more, but turn her over to fate and her own pure courage."

At this point the conversation was interrupted, and Paul Thierry's duties did not allow him to return, though occasionally she caught his eye. She knew what her influence would be for this young artist. She had taken up more than one just at the auspicious moment and floated them on to success, but her efforts were not indiscriminately used. Indeed there were few who would have dared ask such a favor of Mrs. Howarth.

One and another paused in her vicinity. She was a

charming talker, fluent, choice, well read without any pedantry, and fresh without any strenuous efforts after the bizarre or unusual. Her husband came now and then and exchanged a few words with her, but he had other duties as well.

"Leonard," she said, in one of the pauses, "I wish you would call the carriage and send me home. I am quite weary, and my head is aching a little; but do not disturb yourself. I shall feel fresh and rested by the time you are at liberty," and she gave him an appreciative little smile.

"I could go now —"

"No; if you begin to fancy me ill, I shall remain to disprove it."

"As *you* choose," he answered, sending out to summon the carriage.

The cool air quite revived her, for it had grown extremely warm in the Club parlors. It was but a short distance home, and once there her maid assisted her to disrobe and don a white cashmere wrapper, soft and wraith-like in its delicacy. She seated herself at the lower end of the apartment, which overlooked a small garden instead of the street, and enjoyed not only the faint breeze but the quiet. There was no moon, but a throbbing glory of stars seemed crossing the faultless blue of the sky.

Helen Howarth would have finished the trio begun with Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Van Cleve. She had not the delicate finished loveliness of the latter, nor the affluent health and buoyancy of the former; yet there was a sufficient similarity of strong and tender characteristics to make them all friends. As Miss Lennox she had never been considered really beautiful; but her fine and noble face, her suave and elegant breeding, her position and fortune, would have won her the front rank anywhere. It was a face harmonized more by expression, though the features were not wanting in regularity. They had been

trained to the large, pure, noble view of the great truths of life. Evidently she was not a woman given to temporizing. Right was right, truth was truth; her clear, keen eye penetrated subterfuges and weakness, and disdained paltry excuses of irresolution. Poverty would have made a hard woman of her, and in a small round she would have grown narrow; but the larger sphere had been hers, with abundant means. Two or three fortunes had centered in her hands as the last of her branch of the family. But with this there had also come a kind of hereditary weakness; she seldom knew what it was to abound in the perfect health that seemed at times to mock her in other faces.

She had gone one day to Mr. Howarth's office on an errand in which her sympathies had been strongly enlisted, though her whole soul had shrunk in abhorrence. A young brother of her seamstress, the idol of his widowed mother and sister, had been caught in the toils of one of those unscrupulous women who continually prey upon society from a vantage ground where they demand sympathy for misfortune. Wedded to a man much beneath her, who neglected her for haunts of intemperance, she solaced herself with evil admiration, and drew from her lovers gifts that ministered to a passionate fondness for adornment quite beyond her reach in an honorable manner; and they, poor, blind moths, fancied it was from their overwhelming sympathy and appreciation, rather than a cruel, soulless vanity on her part. She had cunningly suggested temptation to Walter Thoresby, and to gratify her insatiable desires he had taken an evil step, to learn that he was only one of many lured in the same dangerous path. Mr. Howarth held in his hands the tangled threads without any clue to their right reading, and she went with a woman's entreaty to a man strict in integrity as herself, but given to mercy. Between them, they saved the young soul.

After that she saw him frequently ; but she did not guess that he sought these circles for the purpose of meeting a large-hearted and large-brained woman, who had enfranchised herself from the petty bonds of society, while preserving its honored traditions of higher and finer life. The sense and presence of repose about her affected him like a harmonious strain of music ; the intense appreciation of the stronger virtues, combined with a clear, discriminating judgment and large charity, rendered them friends in many a good work. She made it possible for him to ask her in marriage ; and if the love was not born in passionate devotion it had its rarer, slower charm. Neither assumed the other's likes or beliefs, but they reached a point of mutual understanding and confidence that made marriage a better thing than courtship had been. Together they pursued their philanthropies. A lovely home, a generous income, fine and cultured taste, purity in word and deed, integrity and sincerity were the corner-stones.

To this home, where children would have been abundantly welcome, none had come. The sore longing in her heart was comforted by a husband's tender devotion, so complete that she was never to know whether he too longed in vain. Once she had spoken of adopting a child. He had smiled tenderly down in her face as he said, with a clear voice in which no pain was visible, —

“My darling, it would disappoint us both, I think. You would look for faults and virtues and reminders of a fatherhood that could never be there, and I might covet graces, strength, fine instincts, and subtile harmonies that might not be the birthright of nature. Can we not be brave enough to take that larger fatherhood and motherhood, — the world that lies beyond ? We have so much, can we not refrain from coveting this in the more generous love for those who need and suffer from the lack not

only of material good, but are hungered and athirst for spiritual and intellectual sustenance?"

They had done this unreservedly. Their beautiful home had been opened as a gate of Paradise to many a weary soul; not for the merely physical comfort and pleasure, though that was large indeed.

Helen Howarth, with generations of noble blood behind her, was a power in society, — the power that a thoroughly good and noble woman in a high position and with abundant means can become. Many there were who fretted a little at her fine-drawn distinctions. Men felt instinctively when they were put aside by that delicate, intangible something. Women looked more circumspectly to their ways, and, while they might chafe, still paid her the high deference the world always offers to purity and honor. Not that she was narrow or straight-laced, but faults and vices shrank away from her clear eyes, certain of being discovered in a quiet, but none the less positive manner.

She did, it is true, pay a delicate regard to the conventional usages of society. The dangerous philosophies of freedom and license found no place in her social atmosphere. Scholars and savants there were in abundance; hardly a topic of the day remained undiscussed; but there was a certain proud respect always paid to this cultured and pure-eyed hostess. Aristocratic, fastidious, and exclusive she must needs be, belonging to the order she did, and with the traditions of the delicate women whose sole living representative she was; but it was no ostentatious pride of mere wealth and blue blood. And she had been known to stretch out her hand and bridge over a pathway for a soul striving to reach some of those serene heights on which she sat intrenched.

She was still sitting by the window, looking much less pallid than when she left her husband, as he entered the room.



"So soon?" she said in her subtilely sweet tone. "I am afraid you hurried. You had duties," and she smiled.

"Thierry was to take his train, so we left together, and I think I attended pretty well to my share of the work in hand. The last of the present season, and I am not sorry! There will be quite a dispersion of the forces in another week. Are you too tired to talk a little?"

"Oh no," and she looked up with a bright smile. There had never been any of the coquetry of love between these two, but always a noble and tender frankness. "Is it about Thierry's little *protégée*?"

"He told you —" and Howarth paused thoughtfully.

"Quite a considerable about her prospects, or rather his hopes for her and her mother."

"He wished us to do something beside buying a picture," and a light that was not quite a smile crossed his face.

"Yes," rather slowly, but not with any touch of repugnance. "It was what I wanted to speak about. Sit down here," and she drew the chair nearer to hers.

"Helen," he said with grave sweetness, taking her hand in his, "before we discuss the Marshalls, I should like to tell you the story of the earlier days. It had no bearing one way or the other on my life when I asked you to marry me, and as ours was not the jealous passion of untrained youth we did not consider it necessary to parade dead and gone fancies to mar each other's content. But I want you to know now the only other regard I ever had for a woman. When my uncle James went to Batavia, I took his place in my grandmother's house at Westwater, as she was too old to make any change in the home where she had spent nearly all her years. I used to visit in several families, and came to know Eleanor Randolph quite well. She was something more than a pretty, attractive girl. Mrs. Mountjoy was a young and stylish matron then, and Mrs. Wilder still a charming society woman.

Eleanor was her niece, and the Wilder mansion was always full of delightful young people. It did not seem to me that Eleanor had any decided preference for the young men who frequented the house, but I did not see her often enough to judge correctly. I liked her very much. I think now that my mistake was in looking more at the woman she might become, than the girl she really was. One evening some peculiar attention on the part of one of the young men, a Mr. Thomas Marshall, roused me to consider my feelings towards her, and under a certain stress, a fear that if I waited I might lose what I so desired to hold, I spoke. To my utter surprise, when she found she could not prevent that part of it, she told me frankly that she was just engaged to Mr. Marshall. He was of good family and had been left an excellent business by his father; indeed," — smiling, — "his prospects at that time were much better than mine. He was a gay good fellow, extremely winning, and greatly admired, but I could not understand his attraction for her. You see she looked at herself merely as the young girl she was at present, and did not consider the needs of the future. To be honest, I found that I did admire her very much, and that it was harder to give her up than I thought. After a while she married; then grandmother died, and I went out to uncle James. On my return, years afterward, I heard the house of Wilmerding, Marshall, & Co. had been compelled to give up business on the death of the senior partner, and that Marshall had gone down in the world. I was much engrossed with other matters, and I had met you; beside I had been man enough not to dream over her when she belonged to another.

"A little more than three years ago she came into my office one morning. Life had gone very hard with her. She had resolved upon a separation from her husband who had then become a wretched sot. A business had been offered to her at which she felt she could make an

honorable living for herself and her children, and rescue them all from the miserable life into which they were drifting. She had tried elsewhere to obtain the money, and had failed ; but she was so confident of her success if she could but compass it. She only asked for a mere trifle, six hundred dollars. At the end of the first six months she paid me one hundred and the interest, and in two years she had paid it all. I can hardly describe to you the proud, fine dignity with which she put it on the footing of an ordinary business transaction between man and man. She made no appeal for sympathy, she used none of the pretty womanly arts of the sex when in distress, and though I inquired about her children she said very little except to bespeak my interest in her boy if he should need it as he grew older. The two years of comparative prosperity had changed her immeasurably. She had become the woman that I first fancied she might be, noble, gracious, yet governed by a proud reticence that forbade her to complain or to reach out for the pleasures of long ago. Her relatives were so incensed at the step, — for Westwater has a most aristocratic element, — that they do not countenance her in the slightest degree. Thierry, who has of course had the best opportunity of knowing her, is most enthusiastic about her, and admires her delicate pride, while it annoys him also. Oddly enough, Mrs. Van Cleve was strongly attracted by her, but she has had — shall I call it strength and courage? — to refuse even her. Having gone out of her own circle, she will not steal back through any small gateway. When Thierry offered me the picture I had no idea of it being Miss Marshall's. Her mother had not even hinted the existence of a genius."

"And so you helped to place her in this awkward sphere of life," said Mrs. Howarth slowly. "I wonder — if there was not something —"

"She had tried other things. During their early years

of reverses she had taken up that frequent effort of unfortunate women, — keeping boarders. Marshall, it seems, shirked the great duty of manhood, dropped down to indolence and intemperance. Do you remember the Moreau who was here — I think about two years ago — on business connected with the Orient Mining Company? We happened to hit upon Westwater one day over our cigars, and I found he had once lived there, boarded with Mrs. Marshall. He gave Marshall a wretched character, while he admired her immensely. Marshall, it seems, used to borrow money from the boarders, and do many things that must have mortified a wife cruelly. But amid all that, it appears that she commanded everyone's respect. 'By Jove,' said he, 'if she had been the kind of woman that a man would have dared to speak to, I'd have offered to help her get a divorce and have married her myself.'"

"That is one point, Leonard," and Mrs. Howarth placed her hand softly over that of her husband. "You know we decided long ago not to aid or countenance anything that might help to weaken marriage vows. The world rates them by far too lightly, and we see the baneful effects on every side. Are we quite sure that she — Mrs. Marshall, was justified in the step she took. Was it too late to save him? Did she try?"

"Ah, my darling, if you had seen her that first time she came to me, you would not doubt. It was a question with her then as to the point of highest duty, which it appeared would be in saving her children. All these years she had provided him with a home, and been compelled to keep him in some degree of spending money, thereby, it seemed, pandering to his degradation. If it had been my own sister, I know I must have interfered. Think of some of the so-called respectable men whom we know, who drink far beyond the point of decency. Could you spend your life with one of them?"

Helen shivered, and the soft color suddenly vanished from her face.

"Judging from what I know of Mrs. Marshall, I do not think she is the kind of woman to thrust aside any evident duty. She only waits for her husband to reform to take him back again, so she is not counting on any legal freedom."

"But it does seem to complicate the case. One cannot prevent questions being asked."

"And, on the other hand, are we to make the innocent child bear the father's sins?"

Yet was it not one of the inexorable laws?

"Leonard," his wife said in a kind of rapid, breathless tone, "I wonder how you would decide now if you saw Miss Randolph and myself for the first time?"

He took the face in both hands, and met the clear, entreating expression, that she hardly knew was in her eyes, with one of perfect honesty.

"Is it quite a fair question to ask?" in a low but steady tone. "How can a man tell the exact truth? In all the years of our married life I have been most happy. I love you wholly, "and he searched his heart with severity. "Eleanor Marshall is no vain or weak woman to lure a man from his duty, and have you read me so poorly as not to know whether I could be tempted?"

"It was the question of a silly girl; forgive it," and her face was drowned in a scarlet flush.

He liked her none the less for her passing half-fear. Drawing her gently to his heart, he kissed her with a fervor she could not mistake.

"Helen," he said with gentle firmness, "you must not talk any more to-night. Think the matter over at your leisure. I must own to a curious desire to see Celia Marshall myself, but it rests with you."

"Thank you," she answered softly.

## CHAPTER XIII.

"But springtide blossoms on thy lips  
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes."

—COLERIDGE.

HELEN HOWARTH paused many times during the succeeding days to study Celia Marshall's exquisite "Spring." The remarkable purity of treatment grew upon her. There were no florid touches, no meretricious challenge of admiration, but a serene confidence that the choice few would understand, while the many might admire. The two men had shown their thorough knowledge of her when they told her the simple truth, and let it have its perfect work on her generous soul: for it was a generous one in spite of the few strictures closing round it now. If she felt a little hurt at first that one secret had been kept from her, her truer, better self recognized that it was not altogether Leonard Howarth's. The very delicacy with which he had shielded another woman from idle curiosity commended itself to her. Was it not a profanation of the holiest passion of life to be so ready to drag it out for inspection? If she were lying in her grave, would she like another woman to question and dissect the love she had borne her husband? Perhaps the noblest quality in Helen Howarth was the readiness with which she applied the Golden Rule to herself. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you." And as he had said, they had not been exigent lovers. He had answered her requirements as to moral and spiritual purity; his manhood was not so much the consummation of affluent culture, travel, and artistic taste, as the noble expression of a rich, many-

sided nature that had never been dwarfed and marred by specious reasoning on the side of weak indulgence. She realized now how immeasurably her love had grown in the years, by this high and fine contact, when she could be stung by the exhumation of a dead and gone love. The admiration still remained. Mrs. Marshall had become the woman his clear insight had predicted.

Was there a keener, nameless pain that could hardly be denominated jealousy, — the anguish of a motherhood that never had been ? Did they ask her, these two men, to take into her house the child of the woman her husband might have loved, to surround her with those benefits her own mother was powerless to give, to advance her, to assist her up the heights of fame with rapid strides instead of making it a tiresome way ? Ah, how could she ? If it had been any other person's child !

That Leonard had not mentioned the money transaction, she held perfectly honorable. He would not have blurted a man's business about, and he owed a woman the same consideration. But how strange that *his* money should have enabled Mrs. Marshall to take the important step in separating herself from her husband ! Was he, after all, involved in her life by some strange undercurrent of fate ?

Mrs. Howarth went about her daily duties. Many a little child in a hospital ward had come to know the gracious, kindly lady with the voice of softest music, and a hand whose every touch was gentle, whose gifts seemed bestowed with some secret wonderful knowledge of the wishes of the recipient. Young girls glanced up at her with grateful eyes when her benevolence made it possible to leave the toil and moil of the deadly struggle for bread, and catch what seemed to them a week's glimpse of heaven. And all the while, like a sad refrain of some distant music, the words were chanting themselves in brain and soul — "This ye ought also to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

A weaker woman might not have risen above self. Helen Howarth resolved upon one step. Her husband had gone on a business trip to meet a convention of some railroad magnates, and the next morning proving unusually delightful, she resolved to visit Mrs. Van Cleve, and, accompanied by her maid, completed the brief journey with no unusual fatigue. She was shown into the lovely reception-room, and awaited the advent of its fair mistress.

"My dear Mrs. Howarth, this is indeed a pleasure!" and Mrs. Van Cleve's eyes expressed more than delight. "And you have come for a visit, so I shall let you rest a bit before I deluge you with questions. Allow me to send away your wraps rather than fatigue you by going upstairs."

The maid disappeared with them.

"Helen," began her friend, hurriedly, "there is another little matter that you must decide according to *your* pleasure. I sent for Celia Marshall this morning, having, after much persuasion, induced her mother to allow her to spend the day, the condition being that she should not be exposed to any embarrassing introductions. She can come again some other time, so you must say frankly whether you prefer to see her or not. You visit me so seldom that I cannot afford to have our delight spoiled," and she smiled with a winning, but impartial expression.

"How odd, when I came to you for a little help to settle this very perplexing question. It has cost me much anxious thought; though I suppose I ought to rise above all minor considerations; but it *is* difficult to make opposing extremes meet, or at least agree."

"I should like you to know Miss Marshall, but I waive my desire in consideration of another gratification. It is a case where generosity ceases to be a real sacrifice."

The clear tone, enfranchised from self, touched Mrs. Howarth.

"I have had — let me confess it — a most ignoble curiosity. I am afraid it is *not* the prompting altogether of



the higher soul" — and a wistful, deprecating light crossed her face.

"I understand all the difficulty." Mrs. Howarth's secret soul knew of one quite beyond her wildest dreams. "Much of it, nay, in some respects, the most perplexing points have been presented to me. I could give Celia Marshall an unquestioned standing here at Westwater, but it would be fraught with perils, embarrassments, and unkindly, perhaps malicious stabs. When one looks into her sweet, pure, sensitive face one hesitates. I am on society terms with her aunt, Mrs. Vanduyne, who holds a strong position, and who has nothing but bitterest blame for Mrs. Marshall. The mother is one of the fair, exceedingly picturesque women, really fascinating in old age, who were educated to consider weakness, dependence, and a respect for man's authority as the cardinal virtues. A business woman is a monster to her, and a serious mortification to Mrs. Vanduyne. Then, on the other hand, I exchange visits with Mrs. Marshall's relatives, frequent parties where they are invited. Between these upper and nether millstones Celia would be crushed. I could say to my brother if he were at home, 'Percival, here is a girl amply worth your study.' I could take her to my uncle's at Philadelphia, — an experiment I shall try in the fall, — and she would charm them. But here my best endeavors would be in a large degree nullified. Men *are* broader than we, my dear Helen; but, on the other hand, the foundations of home do not rest so securely upon them."

"Beside the business, there is the other ugly fact, — a wife separated from her husband. Do you think, Stacy, that she — that the step was inevitable?" and Mrs. Howarth glanced up with an intense, yet half doubting interest.

"Helen, neither you nor I would have lived with the man as long as she did. We are not the kind who substi-

tute long-suffering for justice. I am quite certain, from some matters that have come under my observation, that she could procure an honorable, scriptural divorce. She makes no mention of him, she parades no wrongs, no sufferings, yet she is the kind to whom a scratch would wound almost equal to a sword-thrust. The very manner in which she has held me at bay has heightened my interest in her, increased my respect. She walks the straight and narrow path of a feminine business woman, yet I find we do not honor her as much as many of those who have gained a foothold in a man's place. Why is it, I wonder? Millinery is really a beautiful art, its associations are clean, exquisite, fascinating, and truly refining to one's taste. Yet if she could have started out in land speculation, taken several agencies that would have brought her into contact with not over-refined men, and made some money, I know many doors that would have opened readily to her. Thierry is right, we do *not* respect many branches of womanly labor. Professional or artistic or literary service is all right. Yet here is a woman of the highest refinement, of noblest truth and purity, of education, of exquisite social usage, whom you could introduce to-morrow in the finest drawing-room in the land, and what would follow? Women would raise supercilious eyebrows, set their lips firmly with the virtue of tradition and custom, and pass her by. Oh, we are hypocrites, all of us!" with a gesture of fine disdain. "Let us put by our talk of labor, of raising our sex, of ennobling women, until we are more courageous and truthful to our inmost souls."

"What a beautiful, impassioned champion you are, Stacy," and Mrs. Howarth's face was aglow with admiration.

"Yet I cannot move the least stone of prejudice in this gray old world of habits, customs, and limitations so inextricably blent together that people have come to call the work of their very hands, narrow and selfish as it is, the

precepts of God. Oh, if our eyes were only clear, our hands given to lifting up instead of pulling down ! Look how many things we forgive on the one side, how rigidly Procrustean our bed is on the other ; how we lop off some of the choicest virtues, and tolerate ignoble vices, if only it is in our set ; how we make the chief duty of women to consist in wearing fine clothes gracefully, in enunciating regulation platitudes with nicest pronunciation and in finely modulated tones. You do dare stray outside of that, Helen."

"I incline to the opinion that pure, unadulterated courage is not a strictly feminine virtue, and our attempts at cultivating it are half sham," glancing up with smiling fondness and appreciation at the lovely, graceful woman, whose fine eyes were glowing with a genuine soul atmosphere and whose delicate, faultless complexion changed with her earnest purpose from the dead white of scorn to the fluttering red of humiliation. "I shall try to gird up my faltering nerves and shrinking soul. Do not send your young guest home. I have a something more than curiosity to satisfy. Your lecture was worth listening to and has turned the scale."

"And yet I was thinking more of myself than of you. I do so little. I believe so much, or half believe it. I drop down into a graceful languor, and make myself ornamental as Mrs. Thierry might, without her excuse, — that of an underlying faith in woman's sole duty of being harmoniously beautiful ; yet I shall always have to recognize limitations," and she gave a kind of heroic smile.

"I am rested a little, and inspired a good deal. Shall we go up to your *protégé* or bring her down here?"

"Helen, I wonder if you would lend yourself to a very slight deception," and the beautiful eyes questioned persuasively. "Let me introduce you to Celia as Mrs. Lennox ; it will not be an untruth, only a story half told. You will both feel less awkward, if one can ever predi-

cate such a thing of your superb self-possession. After luncheon we will explain, for I want her to know who you really are."

"Agreed, the plan is charming."

Mrs. Van Cleve went upstairs.

"Celia, my dear," she said with a quiet grace, "an old friend has come unexpectedly to spend the day, and I should like you to have the enjoyment of her society. As she is from a distance your mother would not object, I know; and being something of an invalid, your fresh sweetness will be like a breath of violets to her."

"You are complimentary," and a soft rich color waved on Celia's youthfully rounded cheek.

"You may feel quite free to do your part of the entertaining. I am sincerely glad you happened here."

Mrs. Howarth's unconsciously critical eyes rested kindly upon the young girl who responded to the introduction with a natural grace that had been judiciously trained. Her voice was soft and quite exempt from the crudeness of youth, both in tone and the exuberance of expression. Mrs. Van Cleve had planned most excellently when she spoke of her friend's invalidism, for Celia at once set about ministering in unobtrusive ways, and made herself rarely agreeable. Beginning with commonplace near-by topics, they finally rambled about in the discursive fashion people are wont to do when talking for pure enjoyment on a summer day. Mrs. Howarth watched the grave, sweet eyes as they kindled with interest, grew luminous with expectation, pensive or flashing by turn. It was as if she surveyed life with a sight richly endowed in the fervor of a chaste imagination that led the smaller events of life up to its greater hopes; that clothed with true beauty, and not a riotous semblance the daily duties, the steps on which one must mount to better things. It seemed to Celia almost as if she might be talking to her mother,—her mother with a wider, higher range than

fate had allotted, the generous breadth that travel and association with truly cultured intellect bestows. Purity and refinement were in every motion, and the subtle harmony that is not always the outward heritage of genius. Withal she was a very innocent young girl, and Paul Thierry had not spoiled her with any of his wild fantasies or unconventional beliefs.

Luncheon was announced. Mr. Van Cleve was in the city, as the larger metropolis was designated, and the three ladies were alone.

Celia fell into no blunders. The past three years the mother had so trained her children that they would not have brought a blush to the cheek of the most fastidious hostess. Daintiness was in her and of her, and that quaint simplicity, giving her the air of the finest breeding, when it was only the outcome of a natural sense of harmony.

They were discussing music afterward. Mrs. Howarth asked if she had any special fondness for it.

"I think my gift is in listening and enjoying," she said, with a bright, contented smile. "My sister seems to have quite a genius for it, and mamma may give her the training as a profession, but it would not be quite right for me to waste my time upon it when I cannot excel, and when I have other plans in view. Now and then of an evening when mamma is tired, I pick out a few soft, tender tunes for her, but that is the extent of my musical ability."

Mrs. Howarth led her on to speak of her own plans. There was no silly depreciation on the one hand, nor undue exaltation on the other. She seemed to look forward to a sacred and high calling in which every fibre of her soul was enlisted, and yet she recognized that the way was not all dreams or flowers, but much earnest work, much that must be, in the nature of her position and life, the work for money. Now and then she quoted Mr. Thierry with a grave little inflection, and raised her

candid, serious eyes to either of the ladies with so high a light in them that no one could have read any mawkish sentimentality. He was the teacher, she merely the pupil whose whole duty was to profit by his instruction.

"I think we have sustained our masquerade long enough," said Mrs. Howarth presently, with a satisfied smile to her friend. "My dear child, let me have the pleasure of telling you that I am the owner of your lovely picture, Spring, and if I have taken an unfair advantage of you, please pardon me. I am afraid I have enjoyed too much to be very penitent."

A vivid scarlet flashed over the young face, while the eyes seemed to glisten suspiciously for an instant, and then every feature was irradiated with joy.

"I am so glad you have it," she said simply. "I have coaxed Mr. Thierry to describe you to me, but he was always so vague; and if you really consider it worth a place among your beautiful pictures, it seems as if I might be able to do something more worthy of acceptance in the years to come. Oh!"

She pressed her sweet young lips on Mrs. Howarth's hand, but the lady drew her nearer and kissed her with tender affection. The child of the woman *he* had loved! For a moment she coveted her with a yearning motherly passion that almost rent her heart.

"Mamma has seen Mr. Howarth," she said presently. "She admires him for his generous goodness, but I think one might come to worshipping you."

She uttered this so simply, unconscious of the high and fine compliment it conveyed.

Mrs. Van Cleve was summoned by a caller, and the two made rapid strides in friendliness. Celia's admiration was so candid and honest.

"I wonder," Mrs. Howarth said, "if your mother would feel that she could spare you to me, some day. Mrs. Van Cleve might bring you. I do not know that I could pro-

mise you any more complete gratification than there is here, only the variety may be greater; and Mr. Howarth will like to see you."

"Oh, I am quite sure mamma will consent," with a delightful enthusiasm shining in her lovely eyes. "At least," and a shade of thoughtfulness replaced it, "I *think* she will. Mrs. Howarth, you may not know how really poor people feel about such — such delights," a fine ingenuousness trembling in her voice. "Mamma was reared in quite a different station but we can never reach that, and we are far too proud, and — yes — too honest, to intrude into the circle that is not ours by right. And if I should end by winning fame and making money, it will be the sweeter to me if I can give mamma some of the old delights that have dropped out."

Her voice faltered and ceased. She was looking adown the future and seemed to see the two together in a pretty unpretentious cottage, that should be fair within, appointed with the divine harmonies of love and grace and restful peace for the one who had taken the long weary march. Her face was transfigured.

"The child of the woman he once loved," Mrs. Howarth said softly to herself, "Can I bring him a better gift?"

Mrs. Van Cleve was quite delighted with the proposal when she returned. The carriage was ordered, and first they took a pleasant drive through the shady streets where trees nearly a century old met overhead, and the dwellings wore that leisurely, care-free aspect that comes of well-worn and long-used prosperity. Here and there a group of charmingly dressed girls playing croquet on some velvet lawn, or a summer house with a roof of vines overhead and some pretty young or old occupant reading or embroidering, or a knot of ladies with waving fans and languid grace. Westwater abounded with many such pictures in summer. There were nice old-time people who preferred their own cool spacious rooms and flower-

scented grounds to the heated and overcrowded hotels at seaside or mountains, and took their journeyings before the mad rush began or after it had ceased. Occasionally some one nodded; once it was a fine looking woman with a tall, fashionable girl by her side, who bowed with empressment to both ladies. Neither made any comment to the unconscious Celia, whose thoughts were elsewhere.

Not so with the daughter of Mrs. Mountjoy.

"Wasn't that Mrs. Howarth, mamma?" she inquired, "and that girl in white was Celia Marshall, I am sure. Kitty Gardiner graduated with her at the High School, and now she is studying art—Mr. Thierry is giving her lessons."

"Don't talk such nonsensical gossip!" exclaimed the mother. "Mrs. Thierry would not allow such a thing, to begin with. And if it really was she in the Van Cleve carriage, some business purpose is at the bottom."

"But they have all been out in the Van Cleve carriage."

"Mrs. Van Cleve thinks democratic airs sit well upon her," declared Mrs. Mountjoy in a displeased tone. "Still you never find any mixed society at her house, at least I never have. And if Celia Marshall has a fancy for an *esclandre*, you can at least keep your name out of any such matters. It is no subject for a young girl like you."

Mrs. Marshall had been indulging in a rather indolent afternoon, and now had donned a white dress with some graceful drapery, and fastened a knot of small wild marguerites at her throat, that Bertie had brought home from his morning's ramble. Her little sewing-room had an artistic, still-life aspect, with its bits of color, its table with a few books, a vase of flowers, and some pleasing confusion. She sat in a low rocker reading, when the door opened, and did not glance up at the first moment. Being early in the week, all the girls save one had been given a holiday.



"Mamma!" said a quick, joyous voice.

Mrs. Marshall came forward and received Mrs. Van Cleve's greeting with the quiet demeanor of exquisite breeding. Celia's eyes were all alight with eagerness, and the rich color glowed in her cheek as Mrs. Howarth was introduced. Surprised Mrs. Marshall certainly was; stirred into some unwonted emotion, but all the world might have looked into the eyes she turned upon Leonard Howarth's wife. If the tender jealousy of a mother's longing remained, the jealousy of the woman was forever set at rest in Helen Howarth's heart.

They seated themselves in the dainty sewing-room, with its matted floor and bamboo chairs, which gave it the grace of a summer parlor. Celia glanced at the trio with an artistic eye, as well as that of a daughter. Mrs. Marshall had some glowing tints of superb health without any of the robust coarseness we are wont to associate with it when allied with work and poverty. If the hand was a little firmer than that of these lilies of the parlor, who toiled not, it was white and shapely, and her whole air suffered nothing by contrast. They had come into her working world, she had not presumed, a half-welcome guest, into their elegant drawing-rooms. There was no embarrassment, — she was too accustomed to her position by this time.

Mrs. Howarth preferred her request, and saw the delicate pride that wavered an instant, but Mrs. Van Cleve followed with the arrangements. She would take Celia some day when Mrs. Howarth was quite sure to be alone, they would have luncheon together, and would return before dark, so there need be no anxiety. Celia watched with large, hopeful eyes.

There could be nothing but consent. The mother had her child's future to consider, not that she would have selfishly thought of advancement the first moment it was offered. Paul Thierry had resolutely insisted that no hon-

orable advantage should be neglected. She was won by the noble graciousness of Helen Howarth's face. In her heart she said, "She is just the kind of woman one would want Leonard Howarth to marry;" and she thanked God that two high, strong souls had met and blended together.

"Mamma, it was just like a happy vision all day long," declared Celia, after the adieux had been said. "The little plot was so charming. I should have felt embarrassed if I had been introduced to *Mrs. Howarth* immediately;" and a happy, roseate glow tinged her cheek as she smiled over the surprise. "She is so different from Mrs. Van Cleve, and yet they are of the same type, and you, mamma, are not a whit behind in anything save the utter ease of prosperity. You would make such a lovely lady. Mamma, I think you have grown younger and handsomer in these three years."

"You are a little flatterer, Celia," yet a lovely expression of tenderness transfigured her.

"I always remember one night," Celia went on, "when you came home so worn and tired and hopeless looking — the first time you spoke of Miss Caruth's offer, after the children were in bed — can you recall it? I shut my eyes sometimes and see you just as you were then — I am almost sure I could paint you in a mournful picture; and now you are so bright, so buoyant, only it seems as if the shadow lurked behind — that it never quite disappeared."

"It never has," said her mother in a low tone.

"I cannot help hoping. Mamma, I want to be a woman and — yes, prosperous, famous perhaps, in a small degree, for that implies plenty of work, and we two living together in a pretty, quiet cottage when *he* comes back. I will be the bread-winner and you shall care for him —" her lips quivered, and as they glanced at each other their eyes filled with tears. Celia went to her mother's arms, and both wept together. Mrs. Howarth would have been

amazed at the sudden transition and the keen remembrance.

Returning from the station, where she had left her friend, Mrs. Van Cleve took up Paul Thierry.

"*To triumphe*," she cried, in a joyous voice that resembled the silver trickle of some rivulet over a pebbly way. "You could not guess what has come about by accident, to show how futile all our scheming has been!"

"Not — yes it must concern Celia Marshall, as that is the only conspiracy on which we have agreed. We are too well fed, too fortunate and prosperous for such lean and hungry work. But tell me quick, I pray you."

She related the history of the day with fascinating vivacity. Thierry listened, charmed.

"Never hint to any one that Mrs. Howarth actually went to Mrs. Marshall on a social errand, if you have the slightest regard for your credit as a reasonable and veracious woman. The world would not believe it. I could fancy Mrs. Thierry's horror-struck incredulity — she would immediately suggest a private insane asylum. Still I have a confident hope that some day we shall give Miss Celia Marshall an elegant little reception at our house, and those of Westwater who are invited will not hesitate to come. Yet I *should* like to demolish the millinery store and endow Mrs. Marshall with an Arabian Nights' fortune."

"Even you, brave apostle of universal labor, wince a little over that," and she laughed.

"Some things must be," and he gave a complaining sigh.

"I should have missed several of my prettiest bonnets. She, with no real training, distances Miss Caruth with her years of experience and really good taste. I remember you complimented me in the first bonnet I bought there, and you fell in love with that pretty cross of Celia's."

"The same genius runs through both, but it has a different expression. Mrs. Marshall's flowers are correct and

prettily painted flowers, and she can do some creditable copying; but Celia's violets have been freshly picked in the sedgy woods, you can smell the sweetness, and her daisies are just after the shower, the softness of the rain is in them. I begin to believe in the distinction between genius and talent, though it would puzzle one to draw a correct line in many cases."

"Perhaps those are simply talent, aspiring talent."

"But some fellows go on working, and never know they are beaten, and on a lucky day surprise the world with something really meritorious, for instance, your humble servant," and he gave a gay little ripple.

"Come home with me," she entreated, "and you shall take the carriage back for Mrs. Thierry. It is the perfection of driving now. Stay out as long as you like."

"A thousand thanks."

"And both come down this evening, but not a word concerning Mrs. Howarth. Marguerite would upbraid me with a barbarous deed if she knew I had her here all day alone by myself."

"But you did not. Salve your tender conscience, Saint Agnes, with the remembrance of a noble deed nobly done."

"By happy accident," and she laughed lightly.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"A friend asks no return but that his friend will religiously accept and wear, and not disgrace his apotheosis of him." — THOREAU.

To Celia the day at Mrs. Howarth's was unalloyed delight. It was like going into some far country, for it seemed, indeed, as if some one had —

"Ransacked the ages and spoiled the climes."

Curiosities there were from nearly every corner of the globe, but so wisely and judiciously disposed that the house had no appearance of a museum. There was an odd and bizarre Chinese room, with its queer, foreign air and coloring. Exquisite paintings on transparent silks, birds, bees, dragon-flies, flowers of strange shapes and colors, fountains and pagodas, carvings intricate and frail, one wondered how they held together.

What a difference in the Indian room, with its hangings of silk, its soft, plummy rugs that seemed a part of some dull, dry forest depths, with colors accumulated by centuries of suns and storms and new growth out of decay. Brown reds, purplish greens, tawny tints with backgrounds of twilight hues, all the more brilliant colors subdued and compounded, until the effect was indescribable. Cabinets of costly carving, with gems, old coins, weird and ugly idols of past religions, pictures of strange temples carved in snowy marble, grey-bearded fakirs sitting in the shade of pillared banyans, a dancing girl with sad eyes and exquisite but melancholy poise, as if the joy had gone out of the bare, sculptured feet.

Other rooms soft, light, and beautiful, with all that modern art and wealth could devise, an elegant state draw-

ing-room, with curtains of silk and finest lace, portieres that half hid, half revealed gleaming marbles, and enticing nooks where one could stay for hours. Books of costly proof engravings, cartoons of the great masters, and a picture gallery that held a number of notable works.

"You must not fatigue yourself," advised Mrs. Howarth kindly. "The vision will not vanish, and you can come again."

Celia drew a long, rapturous breath. What would such living be! Was it possible that all this should exist for the comfort of two people! She smiled over their plainness, their few attempts at beauty; she had thought Mr. Thierry's studio a marvel of loveliness, and Mrs. Van Cleve's house a model of taste and elegance, but this was like a palace.

The luncheon was the perfection of serving with the choicest of appointments. Celia was neither painfully shy, nor awkward, but in her quick adaptiveness settled to the ceremonious waiting as if accustomed to it all her days, but giving it the individual touch of her own innocent quaintness rather than any servile copying.

Her "Spring" hung in Mrs. Howarth's room, where the soft, gray tone was touched up with glimpses of wild-rose pink, and the delicate lace curtains sweeping the floor. A dainty, carved bookcase held a choice selection of her favorite authors; there were easy chairs in plush, satin, and bamboo, a luxurious Turkish lounge, an adjustable reading or writing table, some well-selected bric-a-brac, a marble faun, a sad, sweet-eyed Clytie, an easel with a portfolio of engravings. There were other pictures as well, but hers was not really distanced.

Mr. Howarth returned in the early afternoon. When she heard his step, his wife passed her arm about Celia and drew her gently to the door for the introduction, to which the young girl responded with gentle grace, while a wavering color flitted over her fair face. He was quite

different from Mr. Van Cleve or Paul Thierry. There was something in the noble gravity of his habitual expression that raised him above either of them, yet the smile he bestowed upon his wife was instinct with proud and manly tenderness.

Half an hour afterward, as she was flitting about the room in her noiseless and absorbing interest, Mrs. Howarth glanced up at her husband.

"She is not quite like her mother," the lady said. "I can imagine Mrs. Marshall having been a fascinating girl."

"She is handsomer now, she was pretty then; but very unlike Celia."

"Her father —"

Mr. Howarth made a slight negative motion of the head. "There is nothing of her father about her," and there seemed a touch of relief in his tone. "Marshall was brilliant, what the world calls a jolly good fellow, toned down a little by college discipline and business habits. I should not so much admire that style in a girl."

"I like her," Mrs. Howarth said significantly. "Whatever you desire to do for her —"

He raised his eyes to her face. She was glad she had never doubted, only questioned a little, and her soul exulted in his steadfast love. "My darling," he said in an undertone that thrilled her, "you have been generous."

"And I *was* jealous — not of the mother, but the child."

He smiled and touched her hand with his bearded lips.

"Shall we do as Paul Thierry wishes? Why not? We lavish our money upon the poor and needy, can we not bless her with love's gifts? Her mother would be too proud and too delicate to accept many favors."

"Yes, you have studied her to some purpose."

"Through the child mostly. Their souls beat in complete sympathy. If I had a daughter, I should like her to

resemble Celia Marshall," and the light of longing transfigured her eyes. "With all her sorrows, Eleanor Marshall has this treasure."

A drive in the park ended the happy day. Celia parted with them, touched to the heart by their delicate courtesy and unostentatious kindness. When they returned to their beautiful home they both dreamed of the fair young girl who had impressed a curious personality here and there which still lingered.

But Celia's life was not to be all gala days. She had to begin the steady work of her profession, and her teacher seemed to change from praise and indulgence to the utmost exigence. If she had not been so much in earnest herself, and possessed, after all, such a small share of self love and vanity, she must sometimes have given up in a spirit of discouragement, but her fine courage and her desire to excel took her through the most trying seasons. She had her clear, high ideal, and she was by nature too truthful to rest content with any meretricious work.

It began to be whispered about in Westwater that Celia Marshall was studying art with unusual success, that she had sold a picture at a very fair price for a beginner; that Mrs. Van Cleve had taken her up, and some one of note in the larger city was ready to stand sponsor for her future. She was to have the entree of the higher artistic circles, and to be introduced into society.

"What ridiculous nonsense," declared Mrs. Wilder, as she sat with her daughter in the glowing morning room of the latter. It was midwinter now, and tones were correspondingly warm.

"You may call it nonsense, grandmamma, but it is an actual fact that those rich and elegant Howarths in New York have taken her up, and that she went to a luncheon party at their house to meet somebody of note," began Alice Mountjoy in a tone of irritation. "And Mrs. Van Cleve takes her out driving and has her there. I don't



see how such people have the face to crowd into society the way they do!"

"Eleanor is very short-sighted to allow such work. They will take her up for a while as a curiosity, and then drop her, and make her the laughing-stock of the town. If I thought it would do any good to remonstrate —"

"It does seem as if some one ought to advise her mother of the gossip about her," said Mrs. Mountjoy severely. "I suppose she spends hours in Mr. Thierry's studio —"

"She takes her lessons at Archer's photographic rooms. Mr. Thierry has a class there now. I should like to join so much if she was not in it. Everybody paints or carves or models nowadays," said Alice in an extremely dissatisfied manner.

"I shall not have you going into these unwomanly pursuits, Alice," her mother returned incisively. "Girls row, and walk for wagers, and even play base-ball matches, I have heard."

"But I painted at school."

"You have your accomplishment. If you had your living to get it would be a different matter. I have no idea of seeing any of my daughters unsexed and coarsened by work that ought to be kept in the hands of men."

Alice drummed idly on the window sill. She and her sister were in society, the select society, under her mother's and grandmother's eye, quite in the English fashion that Mrs. Mountjoy affected. They toiled not, neither did they spin, and sometimes the hours hung heavily on their hands. Trained piano-playing they had, and Alice had succeeded in acquiring a rather brilliant execution. They went to luncheons and receptions, instituted five o'clock teas, which they both voted a bore, only they *were* stylish. There were a few allowable balls, some dinners and morning calls, but already the spice had gone out of life.

"Percival Chantrey has returned at last," said Mrs. Wilder, coming out of a reverie as to whether she would dare call on Eleanor and offer some counsel after all these years of silence. "And some of the Philadelphia Chantreys are staying with Mrs. Van Cleve, quite a houseful, Miss Redding told me. She called yesterday morning."

"And I owe Mrs. Van Cleve a call. Alice, I think we had better pay it at once. We might like to invite some of them over here. We have not yet outgrown all the nice old ways of social life."

"But Mrs. Van Cleve only came in to see about those people in Water Street, on your visitor's list you know, and we were all there a week ago. There seems such a string of us!" exclaimed Alice spitefully. She felt cross to think that it was quite impossible to join Mr. Thierry's painting class, when she admired him so extravagantly. It did not occur to her that study might not be quite like the amenities of social life. Mr. Thierry was always bright and amusing, and, when the amusement ceased, Alice was flat and dull.

"Very well, I can take your sister," said her mother with an air of offended dignity.

She wondered why it was when *her* mother's girls, Eleanor included, had married young, her daughter at the age of twenty should not even be engaged. True, she was particular, and there seemed a dearth of desirable men. The girls appeared to lack the vim and interest in life that she had always taken, that she still held indeed.

"Violet," she called to the daughter in the next room, "dress yourself for a drive. I have two or three calls to pay."

The novel was stupid, so she sprang up without a second bidding. Nothing else was said to Alice, who watched them in silence. Mrs. Wilder had some charitable errands on her hands, so she bade them good morning.

It was rather gray and cold, but it did not look like

winter when they stepped into Mrs. Van Cleve's broad, warm hall, fragrant with some blossoming lemon-trees, and shaded by palms and great fronds of ferns that gave it the look of an *allée* from end to end, the lower door being all glass.

There was a merry party in the reception room, certainly, and some kind of eager discussion, persuasion. Then a soft delicious voice repeated several verses from a poem of Robert Browning's.

"You would make a fine reader," said a mellow, manly tone. "I can hardly believe that you have had no special training."

"I have been in the habit of reading aloud a great deal to mamma, and she has excellent judgment, I think. She always understands the heart and meaning of a poem."

"But it is unfair for you to be doubly dowered in genius," said a clear girlish voice in a tone of complaint that was amusing.

"That is not a genius at all, and as for winning any fame by it—my voice would not reach the length of a tolerable hall. It answers for a little room like this, and an uncritical audience. Besides,"—you could tell she smiled just then,— "I have other matters to consider. Even all of painting does not come natural, like Dogberry's reading and writing."

Mrs. Van Cleve swept down stairs with a soft sort of hush in the following of her trained dress, and just paused to say a few words, then entered the drawing-room with her brother. Mrs. Mountjoy was delighted and felt at once repaid for her effort. Percival Chantrey, eight-and-twenty, with most of the good gifts of fortune was not the man to be lightly set aside by any mother of a marriageable daughter.

"I hope," Mrs. Mountjoy began "that you are nearly done rambling about, and that Westwater may be able to claim you for some time. We do not like to have our

old friends continually absent," and she gave him a winning smile.

"I mean to keep him now," declared Mrs. Van Cleve, "and make him understand that he does owe some respect to the wishes of his elders."

"We heard your niece was here," ventured Violet.

"Oh yes, Bessie and George. We are thinking of being quite gay for a few weeks, though we have not altogether decided upon our festivities. We must count upon you and your sister, Miss Violet."

Miss Mountjoy looked extremely pleased. Mrs. Van Cleve sent to summon her niece and nephew, who made their appearance, — bright, wholesome young people, in the first flush of youth. Violet had met them before.

They talked of amusements, contrasted Patti and Nilsen, and indulged in a comparison of favorite operas.

"When one hears such delicious singing, one is tempted to break the Decalogue and covet — anything that is his or hers," said Bessie laughingly; "in this instance the glorious voice."

"Some one was reading or reciting finely in the other room," ventured Violet inquiringly.

"Oh, that was —"

"We have another friend staying with us," Mrs. Van Cleve said, in the quiet but incisive tone which finishes an inquiry.

The Chantreys promised to come in to the five o'clock tea the next day. Mrs. Mountjoy left them quite elated by the interest Percival Chantrey had evinced.

"Mamma," began Violet, when they were in the carriage, "do you suppose the girl reading was Celia Marshall? I am almost certain it was her voice. And Mrs. Van Cleve *has* taken her up, in a way —"

"Not even Mrs. Van Cleve dares to introduce her into society," the mother returned, with pompous indignation.

"But if we should meet her anywhere it would be excessively awkward."

"You will not notice her in any manner," Mrs. Mountjoy replied severely. "And, Violet, I want you to be as agreeable as possible to the Chantreys. There is no reason why you should not be a great favorite with Mrs. Van Cleve."

"Oh, but mamma, it is real poky unless there are some young people. And Mrs. Thierry is so intimate—one can never tell whether she says her sharp things in jest or earnest. Mr. Van Cleve is always talking science—and it *does* weary me," with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Every one owes a polite deference to his neighbor in society," was the comment. Why could she not make her girls see that this was policy, that one was almost sure to meet some of the finest young men in town at the Van Cleve mansion.

Violet exchanged notes with her sister afterward.

"There is no use of mamma being blind," said Alice fretfully. "Celia Marshall is beginning to be invited to nice houses, and it is a shame. What if we should meet her?"

"I should ignore her most completely."

"Suppose she were with Mr. Percival Chantrey?"

"It would be horribly awkward, of course, but I should do it."

Mrs. Van Cleve, when her visitors were gone, glanced around on the young people with a face full of meaning.

"We came near having an *esclandre*," and she smiled oddly, with a touch of disdain. "I meant to make some explanations concerning Miss Marshall, but I had not fancied a call like this would occur quite so soon. Mrs. Mountjoy and Mrs. Marshall are cousins, as you know, Percy; indeed, Mrs. Marshall was an adopted daughter of the Wilders. Circumstances, changes, and all that, have broken off the friendly feeling; of course intimacy

is not to be thought of. As Celia really does not go into society —”

“It is a shame, Aunt Stacy!” said Bessie, with the unreasoning indignation of youth.

“Westwater has not grown any broader, while the rest of the world has been making rapid strides,” her brother exclaimed, with fine scorn.

“This must always be a vexed question. You see, after all, a great many of the poorer people are *not* refined, and often have a smattering of education that makes one almost wish they had none at all. Society is apt to draw the dividing line at wealth, and Westwater is no exception. But I meant to say, merely, that, in your interviews with the Mountjoys, do not mention Miss Marshall at all. There is no use in attempting impossibilities. This is one of the places where discretion is certainly the better part of valor.”

“So you haul down your colors, Stacy, when an enemy comes in sight, and solace yourself with an old adage,” her brother said, with a touch of irony. “What I wonder at is your raising them at all, if you do not mean to stand by them.”

“Soldiers are not all alike brave when they first go into battle, and it may be none the worse for my *protégée* if I do recognize some limitations. I have resolved *not* to expose her to anything that may pain or wound. But we must not discuss social ethics with Celia herself waiting in the next room —”

“It is mean and shabby and narrow,” Bessie flung out indignantly. “Celia Marshall is a refined and lovely girl, and well educated, too, and it seems that she has the same birth as the Mountjoys. I shall never like them again, auntie. I am sure Uncle Firman did nothing but talk of Miss Marshall when he came home, and I do not believe he spoke of another Westwater girl. And he is counting so on showing her Philadelphia sights —”

"My dear girl, you will understand some of these questions better by and by. Mrs. Mountjoy occupies the same social position that I do; we work together in charities; we meet the same people; she opens her house to men and women of education and standing, and banns out vulgar wealth. I do find her very agreeable on many points. Childless women like Mrs. Howarth and myself have not yet outgrown our fancy for young folks, and are not quite ready to shrivel up into fossils. The Mountjoy girls are well-bred, accustomed to the nice points of entertaining, and I feel quite safe when I leave any little matter in their hands. I do not think it necessary to drag up their prejudices, or attack the few points on which we do not agree. Surely we owe that much deference to society, and I hold it one of the triumphs of this much maligned world that people with different tastes, beliefs, and theories can meet and find many subjects of agreement. The others we can and do let alone with a wise self-restraint. I knew you would have a delightful day with Celia, but it would have been a cruel stab if I had asked her into the drawing-room."

"I suppose," said Bessie, "that her reading would have had no virtue if it had been known who it was."

"Run back to her, dear," returned Mrs. Van Cleve.

The younger couple left the room. Percival began to pace softly up and down.

"Stacy," he exclaimed, "you puzzle me about this young girl whom you have so curiously taken up. Are such half measures wise, judicious?"

"Since I cannot make them whole measures, I think they are. I admit that I have been converted on some matters that I never used to think about, and this is a case in point. I cannot advance Miss Marshall's interest by thrusting her into the arms of people who will shrink back with well-affected horror, and stare at her with Medusa eyes. Mrs. Marshall's relatives have cast her off because she

went into business; it is a sin against their creed that I could not reason them out of. If she were illiterate or underbred I really should not like her myself, while I might admire her courage and perseverance in providing for her family. So many things are relative, Percy."

"Such as truth, consistency, for instance," with a touch of irony, while the curl in his lip was not altogether hidden by his bronze moustache.

"I do mean to be consistent in this matter," she replied earnestly. "I am interested in Celia Marshall's artistic success, and her success with society as well. I know there are many places where she would meet with a generous and abundant welcome, but she is too young to leave her mother's safe shelter, and her mother cannot step out of the sphere in which she is nobly doing her duty. Celia will never make a bid for the mere approval of the world, her genius soars to the higher point, the nobler part of work done from necessity. She is not, as you can see, a sentimental girl."

"I thought the nobler part of work was when it was not done from necessity," and there was a peculiar suggestive inquiry in his tone.

"There may be some things that require time, patience, and means, that are most praiseworthy, because they cannot be undertaken in a purely industrial manner. I am aware that this may be a heterodox view of the labor question, but it has been forced upon me by some curious experiences. About two years ago, we, the ladies of Westwater, roused ourselves to a laudable effort, and established an Art Exchange, with classes for instruction. We have two very pretty rooms with many beautiful useless articles that we purchase occasionally, under the impression that we are doing art a service, and helping our sex, on a kind of rose-colored path, to industry. I know several ladies who would be shocked at the idea of earning money in a straightforward manner, who offer work



there — they want money for charitable uses, for ‘our church improvement,’ or some needy family; and instead of making a sacrifice, going with one less dress, or an inexpensive plume to their hat, do, I verily believe, use this money for personal adornment. If they can live luxuriously, they have no right to take the money and the work from those who do it for a livelihood, to let their vanity and rapacity add to the heavy weight borne by the deserving and ambitious poor. And oftentimes work to which you can attach the name of some society woman *will* sell more readily. I know of a plaque that was purchased a month ago just in this manner, while one much better, done by a poor and unknown girl, hangs on hand. I am growing disgusted with this playing at work, *sub rosa*, by women who do despise honest, open labor, done from necessity. And there is another view equally despicable. There are three ladies here in the city, who by the death of their father a year or two ago, were left in very straitened circumstances. One of them has as much genius for dressmaking as Mrs. Marshall has for millinery. With their house, which they own, they could soon establish themselves in a money-making business, but they would lose caste, you see. They are on calling terms with the Mountjoys, and several of the best families, and are really attractive women. But to lengthen out their income they resort to almost every subterfuge. They are crocheting and netting and embroidering continually, and by the merest accident I found one of them was painting plaques and panels, and all kinds of holiday goods for a New York firm that cuts prices ruinously, that puts on the market really good work beyond the price of honest competition. It seems to me that girls in industrial art schools, when they come to earning a livelihood, cannot compete with all this underhand work that passes for accomplishment. So I have really come to respect the honest worker who does not add falsehood to her labor.”

"My dear Stacy, I am quite amazed. Thierry certainly has been tainting you with his radicalisms. And your Miss Marshall is not too proud or too refined to call work by its right name, and not undertake it surreptitiously! She is to be honored for that."

"It is one of the truthful lessons her mother has taught her at a high price to herself. Now, I cannot make the whole world open its doors to her really fine work, as they do to Mrs. Faulkner's second-rate screens and fans, but there are some noble souls who appreciate her, and will help her to win in the end. When she *is* famous no one can afford not to know her. Meanwhile, I shall put all the pleasures in her way that she can take without secret pain to herself, and I shall interest people in her advancement who can distinguish between a high and pure aim, and the desire to earn a little pin-money by women who ought to be ashamed of the very meanness of their underhand efforts."

"We shall make a true Apostle of you presently," and he kissed her with fond pride.

Celia enjoyed her day — she always did at Mrs. Van Cleve's, where she was sure to be sheltered from impertinent curiosity or insolence. Bessie Chantrey returned her visit, and the gentlemen came in for the evening. The parlor had received some additions since its first furnishing, but was still simple in its adornments. Daisy played and sang with a piquant grace that was really captivating. She was taller now than Celia, and had much of her father's air and manner, toned down by her mother's steady hand.

"I do wonder if anyone will ever take me up as the Van Cleves and the Howarths do you?" she said wonderingly to Celia, when the evening had ended. "I am sure I could be quite as attractive."

## CHAPTER XV.

"Happiness is a kind of energy." — ARISTOTLE.

Two events happened to Celia Marshall this winter that gave her infinite pleasure. She went to Philadelphia with Mrs. Van Cleve, and had a delightful visit with the Chantrey relatives, a large family whose prestige was unquestioned, and, while there, received an order for a picture. The other was the acceptance of a design for an Easter card, which, when the youth of the designer came to be known, created an unmistakable interest in her favor; so many inquiries, indeed, that Mrs. Howarth decided to introduce her by a reception. She was but little past eighteen, yet her youth, in its quiet simplicity, was far removed from the danger of undue adulation.

The Mountjoys were amazed. That Mrs. Van Cleve should throw her so continually in Percival Chantrey's way seemed mysterious as well as imprudent. But Celia had no thought of lovers. She had not been so much in the world of marrying and giving in marriage, as with older, settled people, who rarely discussed such topics. Neither of the ladies who had so warmly befriended her had daughters to marry. The atmosphere of both homes was of the higher, chaste, intellectual order. Young men did not affect them so much in search of pleasures, and Mrs. Howarth's clear eyes were quick to detect the vicious sentimentality that pervaded so many of the younger circles, where flirtations were held to be quite *en règle*, and a girl boasted of her conquests.

The ensuing summer, Mrs. Marshall let her darling go for a long, bright holiday, though it was after much per-

suation. Mr. and Mrs. Howarth had resolved to take a jaunt westward to Colorado. Both coveted the fresh young girl for a companion. The families met occasionally, Mrs. Marshall was too busy, too much confined at home, and appreciated too truly the difficulties of her position, to embarrass any friend. Mrs. Howarth felt that her husband's judgment concerning the lady had been true and sound. She was, indeed, a noble woman, and one longed to see her in a higher sphere, influencing a wider circle with her unflinching truth, her devotion, her simple and severe morality that could not be blinded with sophistries.

It was true, her life had grown wider at Westwater. Many doors were opened to her that in the beginning were bolted and barred, fearful of intrusion. Celia was sought out, and invitations poured in from well-meaning but injudicious people, who were fain to lionize her; and here her mother's good sense guarded and guided, and Mrs. Van Cleve's discrimination winnowed the chaff from the worthy respect. Some women would have triumphed in thus gaining the *entrée* of the higher classes, and in a few instances the return of her old friends.

"You know," she said to Mrs. Howarth, her face suffused with an expression of fine ingenuousness, "how deeply, truly grateful I am for all you have both done. If I do not accept the larger favors for myself, it is because circumstances forbid. I am still a wife in the eye of the law, and for my children's sake I cannot expose myself to gossip. Let me stay in my secluded sphere; but Celia can begin honestly, openly."

So at last she had consented to the trip. What it was to Celia, all the endeavors of her after-life betrayed. With her eye trained by the rich and varied experience of Paul Thierry, she was ready for the keenest and deepest impressions, magnificent hues, and imperial coloring. Great stretches of forest with shifting light and gloom; mountains with their sublime lines, bold and strong, that the

great Master Artist had laid on with breadth and vigor that quite mocked human effort ; sweeps of prairies, as far as the eye could reach ; fields of golden grain, that seemed indeed the world's grand harvest-ground ; lake and river with placid bosom or hurrying rush, joining with a thousand quivering notes the majestic truths of beauty ; storms that swept in passionate, destructive wildness that one could never forget ; winds that racketed through forests with a trampling roar, like some escaping animal hunted to its doom ; sunrise and sunset that were poems traced by an inspired hand.

If they gave on the one hand, Celia repaid on the other, with her fresh young enthusiasm, her tender love and respect, her earnest feeling, her continual refreshment of soul that had in it no weariness, no straining after effect. Her gayety had the strength and brilliance of the early morning sunshine, and she seemed to animate everything within her reach for the pure love of shining. The breadth of innocent hope because faith was pure and strong, the inspiration of grateful love that had in it a proud and high appreciation, no narrow soul could so completely have embodied.

More than once they had fallen in with travelling parties, pleasure-seekers like themselves, or business people who snatched a brief hour from the rush and whirl to devote to an old friend.

It seemed to Celia that Mr. Howarth showed even grander here than she had ever remarked before. Nothing dwarfed him. Strong, compassionate, tender to his wife as some mother of her darling, there were no weak or superficial lines. No virtue of home was dropped when society's keen eyes were off him.

On their return journey they met with an artistic New York party, some of whom Celia remembered at her reception. One of their number, a Mrs. Linthorpe, especially pleased Celia. She had made her way up to her

present position, which was an unquestionably fine one, weighted by an intemperate and brutal husband, and, in early life, four children. Her two girls had died young, her two sons were settled in business, her husband had been dead for some years; and now she found herself free to enjoy the fame and honor she had wrested from the world by the very hardest.

She never quite knew what drew the young girl to her with such a subtle fascination, but she recognized the impassioned soul of art in its purest estate.

"Such a friendship can do her no harm," said Mrs. Howarth, "and it may benefit her at home. One can trust Paul Thierry to the uttermost, but it is time she made friendships among her own sex."

To this experience was added another that was destined to work much change and pain in Celia's hitherto simple existence, which had been kept from fever heats through girlhood's budding years. The only really young man in the party was an unspoiled favorite of society, the last of a long line who might have vied with Helen Lennox in pride of ancestry. Blue blood filtered through channels of royalty across the ocean, and kept intact until the precious drops grew scantier with every generation. There were but three of the old stock, — Mrs. Sherrard, her single sister, Miss Fairfax, and her widowed sister, Mrs. Livingstone, who seemed always hovering on the brink of the grave.

A generation ago they had been magnates at Newport. New people had come in with their wealth and stir, but Sherrard House held its own in exclusiveness. Its gray stone walls frowned scornfully upon the intruder, its high fences, enclosing acres of land that no money could buy, laughed modern prettiness and improvement to scorn. Not that it was lacking the care or beautifying hand of wealth. Woodlands of choice trees; alleys of shrub and flower that might have graced a palace; garden and

orchard loaded with choicest fruit; graperies and hot-houses that gave summer productions the whole year round. There had been a time when the bitterness of winter or the dearth of society sent them abroad, or to some city; but years and increasing infirmities made such changes troublesome. On rare occasions the house was opened to visitors of note, but no plebeian ever crossed the threshold. A foreign prince, with the air of courts in his mien, might be proffered some courtesy, or perhaps be tendered a reception; and a few of the old, aristocratic families, whose ancestral line was blurred neither by *mésalliances* nor the horror of modern money-making, were occasionally invited within the sacred precincts. The divine right of birth was the strongest article in their creed; and a Charles I. might have handed it down direct to these three haughty, wrinkled, and withered dames, who to-day kept up as much state within their walls as any queen in the land.

That Fairfax Sherrard should have come from this exclusive, narrow ancestry and not been flawed or ruined by either extreme was always a puzzle to Mrs. Linthorpe. Some far-back breadth and strength must have filtered through azure veins, unknown to either parent, some subtle forces that might, under other surroundings, and the true ambition of a fine and comprehensive moral reach, have made a man useful to himself and the world around him. He had passed through the season of youth comparatively unscathed; not so much from love of virtue, as a sort of ingrained disgust of vice and its accompaniments. It had been in the usual channels of a young man who has no ambition to occupy a place in the arena of active working life, or the hope of moulding other souls, of leaving an impress on something more durable than shifting sands. A college education, with the Harvard grace and refinements, a run over Europe with a few unexceptionable compeers, and while abroad he had

made his only plunge in the fascinating mysteries of evil that engulf and sweep away so many precious souls. To him the remembrance even now was hideous, revolting. His fastidious soul shrunk with such an overwhelming distaste that it was not likely to be repeated, though no high moral sentiment would ever restrain him; rather the material desire of possessing a clean, wholesome, healthy body. Fine and lithe of form, moulded in an Antinous gracefulness, the perfect embodiment of youthful health and strength that was the admiration of his friends, who had more than once modelled him; a complexion radiant with sobriety and the matchless bloom of youth; light, silky hair, with a sort of indolent curl; brown eyes with the winey tints of ripened richness; and features of a rather Greek order, needing only a very little to render him captivatingly, dangerously handsome, but stopping short of that little, which left him on the safe side. The Greek temperament, too, daintily sensuous rather than sensual, pleasure-loving, revelling in the higher forms of enjoyment, and irradiating a joyous light that warmed and cheered, but did not scorch in any lurid blaze.

Some curious likeness and unlikeness had drawn him and the woman so much older that she might have been his mother, together. It was quite free from the vicious sentimentality with which modern vampyres among women fasten themselves on young souls and drain them of honor, manliness, purity, and respect; who drag them down to the very brink of moral ruin, where too many take the fatal plunge. Her whole life had been a disappointment, a brave struggle with but small results, except those invisible to mortal ken; recorded in the book of life, to be met with and welcomed with pure spiritual joy when the leaves are turned by God's harvesting angels, who gather up what even the careful husbandman may have missed.

Her two little girls had wailed out a sickly babyhood, the



innocent victims of the old inexorable law that curses its woful progeny by the tragic marks of kinship ; yet men, witnessing the terrors, shrink not from perpetuating them.

Her sons, born earlier, inherited neither the vices of their father nor the enthusiasms of their mother. Commonplace, sturdy lads, destined to form a part in the breakwater of civilization, by resisting encroaching influences and stealthy tides that might end by sweeping all away, they took their places in a manful but rather stolid fashion, aiming at much material good and worldly prosperity. They had wisely chosen wives of their kind, thrifty, sensible girls between whom and their finely attuned mother-in-law there could be but little heartfelt sympathy. The hard question that had pushed Mrs. Marshall to the stony wall of decision had never been hers.

There was a sufficient and comfortable maintenance, there was leisure for the pursuit of her art ; indeed, but for that exalted passion her soul must have withered and perished. Always, too, she clung to the impassioned belief that she must eventually save her husband ; that prayer and work and waiting could not be given in vain, totally lost. And yet, one day she saw him drop dead at her feet in an instant, with no moment even for her brief agonizing cry to ascend, a bloated, empurpled, disfigured corpse, and her life work was done. Had it been wasted ?

Thenceforth she devoted herself to her art. She had many delightful friends among generous and cultivated men and women, and, not hampered by any grinding compulsion, she had done some excellent and praiseworthy work. She had met young Sherrard in society, and his fresh winsomeness presented such a strong contrast to the idle, languid, *blasé* youth of the day, that she was at once strongly attracted to him, and the two had dropped into a thoroughly beneficial friendship. Why had she not been the mother of such a son, she asked, with vague, troubled questioning.

Not that Fairfax Sherrard was in outward respect above the tone of his class. He indulged in many of their amusements, if he shrank from copying their vices. If some magnificent purpose or impulse could once rouse him to a true sense of the obligations of real manhood, what could he not attempt? She had ambitious dreams for him, motherhood dreams, denied and repressed, yet she still longed to train and shape some brave soul. He seemed so provokingly content to drift, to enjoy, to live in to-day, quite indifferent as to any treasure stored for the morrow. He spent months together in the different cities, he travelled when bored beyond measure by the demands of society, and between whiles spent a few weeks at home—that seemed like the ceremonious court of some petty kingdom. These three women, with their ailments and engrossing invalidism, their punctiliousness, their rigid usages and customs handed down from the decades of long ago, wearied him, for he was of the fresh, progressive world. Much society had given him more democratic views, made him broader; while his innate fastidiousness had kept him from vulgar contact.

Once he had proposed to bring a waft of revivifying life within the sacred precincts of Sherrard House, to open its doors and let a small portion of the appreciative feast upon his treasures. His mother had glanced at him with surprise and horror in every line of her wrinkled, narrow, aristocratic face.

“Give a ball or a dinner?” she had almost shrieked, in her thin, disagreeable voice. “If you must consort with the rabble, Fairfax, entertain them at your club, or give your ball at the Casino, that blot and disgrace of modern social life. At least, let us end our days in respectability.”

He had given his ball at the Casino, and the fame thereof had spread far and wide. He had entertained a Russian prince on his yacht, he had danced with

society belles, and been the cause of much envy, jealousy, and heart-burning. This summer, tired of it all, he had gone off to the grand and honest simplicity of nature, wooed by Mrs. Linthorpe's voice, that persuaded, and occasionally roused him from his charming indifference and graceful languors, but failed to inspire him with a desire to attempt any nobler work than the search of pleasure.

And here he met Celia Marshall, not so utterly different from delicate and truthful girlhood as he imagined, but oh, so dissimilar to most of the younger women who seemed massed as an attacking force on a man's freedom. It seldom alarmed him and often amused. He knew, of course, — how could he help knowing? — that he was considered one of the prizes in the matrimonial market. He had been made love to so often, — covert but meaning love, — that any other man would have been spoiled by insufferable vanity. Perhaps the truth and good sense Mrs. Linthorpe dealt out to him so liberally had somewhat counteracted this. It was a fresh, invigorating shower-bath, after the warm night of dancing and dissipation, faded flowers, and stale perfumes.

This sweet, fair girl, with her tender, half-shy buoyancy, her untrained grace that had a suggestion of wild rose about it, yet never transgressed the higher, unwritten code of decorum, her clear, soulful eyes, that expressed so much, her dainty ways, and choice, delicate words, that seemed a part of her inward being, her exquisite purity, that held in it no line of weakness, a quick, sensitive soul, responding to the finest shades of tone or manner, enabling her to adapt herself to others, and adjusted her harmoniously to the natures in accord with hers like a strain of pure and reverent music.

"I don't know what her mother may be like — oddly enough we do not always go to our parents for graces or virtues," said Fairfax Sherrard to Mrs. Linthorpe, "but

she should have been born Mrs. Howarth's daughter. Are you quite sure it is no Lennox relative? She certainly has all the points of the azure and the ermine."

"You may know she has both, or Mrs. Howarth would not have taken her up. A reception at the House Beautiful of the Howarths is a passport anywhere, and Miss Marshall has a remarkable genius, or Paul Thierry would not have stood sponsor for her."

"Her's will certainly be the success of genius. I never saw a purer or more unworldly ambition," and Sherrard lapsed into thoughtfulness.

"It would be like a marriage of the gods," — and for an instant Mrs. Linthorpe gazed into vacancy with the awesome eyes of one who has seen a vision or heard a voice from the invisible. Was it spoken? She glanced at the young man's face — no, it was only some mysterious insight of the possibilities, that come as a presentiment. He was not a man to marry for money, or for the world's approval, he would have enough of the one, and he was not so closely bound by the other. Would not a wife like this, with her high truth, her clear, unflinching honesty of purpose, and her guilelessness, like the solemn grains of light in an agate, keep a man from the insidious influences of the coarser, commoner, life? Might it not even serve to rouse in him a spirit of noble deeds, well and simply done.

But Mrs. Linthorpe wisely kept her dreams to herself, as they wandered on by lake and river, through old-time, quaint Canadian towns, where the young girl's eager eyes read many a strange and fascinating tale, and garnered such visions of beauty that all her after-life was the richer for it.

Sherrard met a party of friends at Montreal, who induced him to join them on a hunting expedition in the wilds of Maine.

"You have thrown away your whole summer on mid-

dle-aged women who have no daughters to marry," exclaimed Mrs. Linthorpe laughingly, "so it is but fitting that you should spend your autumn with men who will brace your mental stamina by inveighing against the delusive snares of feminine influence. By the time we meet in New York you will be proof against the most fascinating wiles. It is well to fortify some 'forlorn and shipwrecked brother' against temptation."

"Are you quite sure you have offered me no attraction?"

His voice was very low, and his eyes were turned away. She did not answer. He reached out for her hand and pressed into it some sacred, secret knowledge, but the next morning he said his good-byes with the gracious ease of a gentleman of the world.

Meanwhile some new plans were arranged. It seemed quite necessary that Celia Marshall should establish herself in the larger city where there were better opportunities for both fame and work. After she had won her standing, Westwater might be proud of and rejoice in its daughter of genius, but it would stand apart with that well used conservatism until she had proved her claim to its consideration, until indeed not to know her and her work would argue one's self unknown indeed. Mrs. Linthorpe offered to matronize her in the world of art, to share her studio, into which there came no vitiating breaths of scandal. Mrs. Howarth felt that she could not be placed under more favorable auspices. She would be a daughter of the heart to them, an inmate of their home in her leisure hours. Her winsome tenderness had brought with it no jarring element, but crept with such a subtle sweetness into the vacant motherhood of the other soul, that at times she had much ado not to envy the woman less favored by fate.

Celia was still to do much of her work at home. Her generous heart could take in other lives, but nothing

could win her duty and affection from her own mother. She brought back so much unalloyed brightness that Eleanor Marshall understood how it might be presently when they two were all in all. For somehow it did not seem as if Celia Marshall was the kind of girl to marry. Already Daisy had a little court of admirers and shone a queen among them. There would be small necessity of her facing the world and asking the meed of labor. Perhaps better so, and the mother sighed unconsciously. The graces of home would always be more to her, not that she had any high and fine ideals like Celia. Indeed she was a bright, attractive girl, asking of the world no impossibilities but on the alert to take the best that was offered. She seemed to understand with the intuitive ease of an actress where and how she appeared to the best advantage, and the art of posing for any grace or virtue. Not that Daisy Marshall was deceitful, she had an open honest detestation for falsehood, yet she lent herself so bewitchingly to any small sham that it was the very art of simplicity. She chose her friends with a peculiar cleverness rather than affection. They must be agreeable to her, they must not distance her, nor shine her down in a moment of pique, but be ready to offer all the real advancement in their power. She was not an effusive nor adoring girl, yet she managed that other people should entreat her, while she remained delicately chary.

With a secret pang Mrs. Marshall admitted to herself that there could never be the exquisite sympathy between herself and this daughter that there was with Celia, though Daisy was not wanting in frank regard, but it was a clever worldly regard, with a certain brilliance that reacted upon the daughter. You saw more than simple affection in Daisy, the kind of devoted love that adored her, yet she would not have heroically borne her mother's burthens, or lightened them with any self-sacrifice. The selfish daintiness and fastidiousness that had protested

years before in childish disgust at menial employments was still in her and of her. She might have hated the store and all its associations if she could have aspired to Celia's heights.

Celia went to work with earnest humility and assiduity. Paul Thierry approved of the new arrangement, since it gave a greater breadth and scope to her artist life. Orders came in—not with the rush that heroines of fortune achieve at a single bound, but enough to encourage her in the path she had chosen, and make future prosperity almost certain. She never feared or faltered. The serene faith of patient genius was hers, rather than passionate elusive aspirations after what was not. There were daring flights that she could not essay until years and experience had ripened and mellowed the crude judgments of youth.

Mrs. Van Cleve took unalloyed delight in the sweet young girl. Westwater began to open its eyes to the fact that she was asked to meet notable people, Van Cleve or Chantrey relatives, artistic and intellectual men and women whose standing was unquestioned. Percival Chantrey paid her some very delicate attentions. Even Mrs. Thierry admitted that she was really charming, only the shadow of her mother's business would loom black and ugly behind her.

"I shall have to take her up," she said in a tone of most fascinating complaint, "Paul really gives me no peace of my life. But do you know that I think that tall, graceful Daisy, with her delicious voice, ever so much more enchanting. If she were a settled professional that one could pay, I should give a *musical* with her for its great attraction."

Daisy Marshall would have exulted at that opportunity. She was secretly praying that some opening in church music would present itself. As for teaching stupid children scales and exercises and the art of fingering,—

her piquant nose took on a retroussé expression at the bare thought.

Late in autumn, when the wanderers of brilliant plumage turned their flight toward the great metropolis, and gayeties of all kinds were under discussion, Fairfax Sherrard bent his steps thither. He had made his duty visit at Sherrard House and listened to the querulous complaints of unlovely old age. His rooms were in a farther wing, where cigar-smoking, flute and guitar playing, or the click of billiard balls, would disturb no one. It lacked piquancy, interest. These narrow women, who had long ceased to hold him in any other light than the natural transmitter of the family name, had no especial use for him save to grace a table, and even then he sometimes failed to impress the retinue of servants with proper awe and dignity. They approved of the old rigid, masterly spirit, when a man's simple gesture could make his retainer tremble, and who exacted the utmost tithe of respect.

Sherrard liked better the democratic freedom of a hotel, where he could receive his guests in undress character, though it was always that of a gentleman. He lounged at his Club, he haunted Art rooms and studios, he accepted invitations to dinners, receptions, and dancing parties. He was not the great man here, there were men in Wall Street and elsewhere who would have made a trifle of Sherrard House with its ancient glories. He liked the new blood, the vein and vigor, though it must not come too near.

There were people who sneered just a little — oh Mrs. Sherrard if you had known that! — at his rather fastidious dilletanteism; there were others who, not understanding the clean, wholesome nature of the man, laughed at his cowardice, as they termed it, that stopped short of the more daring pleasures, the fascinating sins. To them a man with money who neither drank, gambled, betted on horses, or played fast and loose with women, was a “cad.”



That he should cross Celia Marshall's path here and there was not strange. At Art reunions he came sauntering in when the evening was half spent, and Mrs. Howarth's teas found in him an unobtrusive guest. Then he posed for a conception of Mrs. Linthorpe's. Celia worked steadily, coming now and then when some question was referred to her, and answering or criticising with frank, modest innocence. She listened to the gay sparring between the two, or the more serious talk when Mrs. Linthorpe tried to rouse him to a belief in his own capabilities, to the aim of a high and sincere manhood.

"But what am I to do," he cried petulantly one day. "You are like Carlyle, with his eternal hammering about wrongs. Shall I go on the Street and risk name and fortune, honor and honesty, in the madness of a speculating mania, or shall I enter the fragrant arena of politics and demean myself at primaries with villainous whiskey and atrocious profanity, or become the demagogue of labor and talk treason to governments and the annihilation of common sense. Mark me out a career."

"I should mark out none of those, and truth, you know, lies between extremes. There is a long, brave battle for every man to fight, between the accordant and discordant forces of this world, even to save his own soul and shape it to anything worthy. If he means to be high and strong he must have an ideal set before him and strive to reach it, not go drifting down shallow seas, gathering pebbles that turn to mere common stones the instant they are out of the water and the glint of the sunshine — like so many of our virtues. For do you suppose, if honor and honesty were not so rare, these shocks to business confidence that occur every few weeks, at which the whole world seems to stand in amaze, could occur; and if a man were studying the true well-being of the State, would he do it with intemperance and profanity, or the good of his fellow-men

with that treason to right and virtue that should thrill every soul with shame?"

"But your task is herculean, as women's often are. You do not tell us where to begin."

"I can tell you where to begin. Let a man try to comprehend the dignity of his own soul, and give to the world some continual progress in well-being, some duty done simply and nobly, some energy, fearlessness and loyalty that shall make a bridge for a weaker soul to cross, some effort to make the virtues actual, living things, and not prettily rounded statements for effect. Do you suppose men in the aggregate could so lower the tone of honor and truth, if men in the individual did not cling to a secret infidelity respecting the existence of disinterested motives, of a pure strength and uprightness? They will be no worse than their fellow men if they do this or that, and the very thought supposes their fellow man weak and vile."

"You are making a hero, such as the world never saw, is she not, Miss Marshall?"

He was half reclining on a lounge, draped with an Indian shawl, his fine figure in an artistic attitude of the most perfect repose. Celia's corner was screened off when she chose, but now one screen was pushed partially aside, and he watched her from his coign of vantage as she worked with the fine, choice touches that always characterized her. She glanced up with a high light in her serene eyes.

"I think the world has seen them, and it could see them even to-day."

"Tell me where to look for one?" There was a touch of light incredulity in his tone.

"Mr. Howarth is one," she answered gravely. "And there are others."

"Howarth is one of the manliest of men, I will admit," he returned candidly. "He impresses you at once with strength and integrity."

"And why should there not be others to so impress you?" asked Mrs. Linthorpe. "He never aims at the large, heroic endeavors; it is the 'common daily life divine.' People brought into casual contact feel this. You trust him intuitively, yet it is not because he demands your trust in any imperious, sweeping manner. He always leaves you free to choose, yet when you are with him you cannot help but choose the nobler and more vital truth. Fairfax, why not study him?"

The young man glanced at Celia, whose ardent eyes were inspired with the same thought. Only such a man ought to win her. Must she some time stumble over the feet of clay that many a woman's ideal was found to possess?

There was a long silence, and the two ladies went on with their painting. What made him recur to the three narrow trivial formal lives at Sherrard House!

## CHAPTER XVI.

"How shall my soul go to meet her,  
Who never will hasten to me."

WHY Fairfax Sherrard haunted all the nooks and spaces familiar to Celia Marshall, he did not pause to inquire. There was nothing obtrusive in it, nothing that would have aroused suspicion in any worldly soul. Days when she did not come into the city, he would stroll into Mrs. Linthorpe's and take an empty chair, study the half finished painting, or some new thought dimly sketched. There were so many of these "thoughts," that he marvelled at her fertile brain. A chance sentence, a grouping of people in conversation, a line of verse, had its story for her. With all this richness of imagination there was none of the volatile impatience that so often ruins a fine conception. Her industry and perseverance were remarkable. She sketched as a musician sometimes plays a fugue or an aria from the sense of sweetness remembered or longed for, and the moment after, takes up the real work.

Another woman might have roused a suspicious self-consciousness in Sherrard; Mrs. Linthorpe did not. Celia was too sacred in her eyes to be made any subject of bantering. So he came and went, he watched her at concert or opera, or, if he approached her, it was with a high delicacy that touched Mrs. Howarth, who kept a watchful eye upon all young men. Playing at love, and flirtations she detested. In her estimation there was no surer way of destroying the capability of a deep and enthusiastic passion, than the frivolous and half sentimental intercourse that professes to hold the other in light esteem.

Just before Christmas a sad and trying accident had happened to a young artist friend, that would disable him for some time. With the improvidence of genius, or perhaps the boundless trust of youth, he had encumbered himself with a wife and "bairnies twa," who were now brought to the verge of want. Two or three friends had discussed projects which finally settled into an evening of tableaux and music to be given at the house of one of their number. Mrs. Linthorpe, who was known to be an adept in such matters, was made sole manager, while material of every kind was generously offered; but she was one of those rare persons who could not be induced to use what she did not want, and yet could decline with a grace that did not offend. She chose with nicest taste. Because a purpose was benevolent, she had no mind to offer a second-rate entertainment.

"But why Miss Marshall in this Pygmalion?" asked some one. "There are much more beautiful girls. No one can help admitting her genius, but it is not so much that one needs here."

"I think it *is* genius," was the reply. "Wait, and you will see."

Fairfax Sherrard had been persuaded to take a part, but Mrs. Linthorpe dealt them out to her liking.

"Who is to play sculptor?" he asked with an assumption of indifference; but his breath fluttered a trifle in his voice, discernable to her quick appreciation.

"Leigh Esdaile; he will be quite at home in the part."

"That—" surprise checking the sentence.

"I should not choose a young man, of course," with charming carelessness. "Have you any idea how long Pygmalion must have dreamed? Souls are not the work of a moment unless achieved by a god."

"You *will* have a contrast," and his laugh was flavored with irony.

"Esdaile makes up better than you would think. I have

seen him pose. I want you to watch this from the point of a spectator. In fact no idlers are ever allowed in *my* green-room."

Her rules were inexorable, even if he had not been too indolent to argue.

He obeyed her bidding exactly, in fact he had rather a fancy to see this page of Greek mythology and art from the audience side. His tableau was almost the last, where he was to play Antinous to an Emperor Hadrian.

The room and the lights were arranged to perfection. Between the audience and the tableaux was stretched a screen of white tarletan that served to lengthen the perspective, and soften the view with an intangible tenderness. There were pictures that seemed almost to rival art and outdo marble. The music between was soft, fine, suggestive, as out of leafy coverts.

The audience studied their perfumed programmes. The curtain rose.

On its pedestal stood the sculptor's work, — his long, long thought that had been interwoven with his life, that had transfused every throbbing pulse, that had drawn his soul from the contemplation of all else. It is marble fairness and stillness, so still, indeed, that one wonders and is half afraid. Every fold of drapery displays the most accurate as well as inspired carving. The man's handiwork is done, not another touch can be added. The face is faultless in the constituent elements of marble, the chaste, serene, exalted, heaven-born purity. Could she have been fairer? A woman might touch with tenderness, this statue stirs and entrances with nobility, with the most perfect, passionless grace, the embodiment of supernal loveliness.

What is it stirs, — as if some faint pulsation, a mere quiver touched the classic folds of drapery, fluttered warily adown the arm and the marble fingers? The artist starts, listens, looks with an almost divine hope; the

audience lean forward, the fans are poised motionless, every face has a startled expectancy. Is it some far ray of spiritual essence that asserts itself, kindled by the electric consciousness of the other? There comes a faint swell like a calm breath, the lips are tremulous, the lids throb with a secret sense of awakening, the long lashes quiver, the eyes open slowly; it seems as if it were moments, and there is in them the direct, wondering, questioning glance of a child, the blossoming of a pure white lily, not any sensuous, heavy, midsummer flowering. Her large-lidded eyes rest upon the soul, the inward power that has challenged hers and made it answer to a new creation.

Slowly the curtain falls. There are to be no repetitions to-night, but the subdued and well-bred applause is urgent, entreating.

Fairfax Sherrard sat and gazed spell-bound at the curtain that shut her out from him, with an awful sense of loss that went shivering through every pulse, tearing passionately at his soul. Another had her — back there in a dim world; and all the savage blood that had for generations been filtering through its blue courses rose and demanded her with such an intensity of desire that he could have rushed into that mysterious haunt and torn the man limb from limb. A mere flash, a moment's vivid want, yet long enough, vehement enough to send some answering drops out on his white forehead. Then he smiled. Nineteenth-century men of breeding and culture wooed and won a woman at their leisure, if convinced they really wanted her.

The curtain rose again; it was something beautiful, though not as rarely exquisite, perhaps, for the embodiment of life in the other was simply superb. An intangible sense of disappointment was visible in the faces and the almost indifferent attention of the audience.

"I need not feel troubled, they will scarcely notice my

Antinous," he said with a touch of petulance. But as it neared his time, he picked his way delicately through the room into the hall, and from thence to the robing-room. Celia Marshall was nowhere about; she had glided away quietly in her soft gray nun's dress and dainty bonnet, with a touch of blossom color in the feather, to a seat beside Mrs. Howarth.

The curious Egyptian room with its semi-barbaric luxury was a great contrast to all that had gone before. A magnificent dog lay at the Emperor's feet, and he had just turned from the window, where he had been endeavoring to read in the stars the truth of the scroll he held in his hand, that predicted his woeful loss. Leaning against a column crowned with flowers stood his favorite, in an attitude of such fascinating grace that he appeared akin to a poised Ganymede. The drapery and the flowing curls seemed to detract at least ten years; it gave him the physical beauty of perfect, unflawed youth. Was there struggling through the brain some far ray of that old heroic paganism, of which the modern, the paganism of to-day, is but mummy-like cerements; rousing the deeper manhood touched into new life by the story of the Crucified, until he longs to answer the prediction and set his great Master's heart at rest?

Celia Marshall believed so, and some faint girlish pulses never stirred before were startled into an answering thrill as she drew a long responsive breath, and yet shrank from a step in that untried country whose mysteries were rapidly encompassing her.

Sherrard lingered a moment to clasp Mrs. Linthorpe's hand.

"It was perfect," he said with fervent enthusiasm. "I never saw anything like it."

"Ah, you realize now how an artist's soul can translate the hidden meanings of art. A merely beautiful girl would have been self-conscious, and nine women out of



ten would have coquetted. Celia Marshall is profoundly ignorant of such a thing."

"I believe you," he replied.

That night he tossed restlessly upon his bed, and dreamed vague, delicious, half-awake dreams. He had been roused and moved by a woman's beauty; he had been a little lured by irresistible, seductive grace, but here all was innocence. The man who loved her now could write his name on the white, unflawed page of the purest soul he had ever known, ever would know. Should he make the indelible mark?

He began to haunt the Howarths' now with a mysterious persistency. Once or twice he sent Celia flowers, but even that seemed daring. Apart from her he still heard the lingering cadence of her cool, clear voice, that had not come to heats or passions. Now and then he touched her fingers, once they danced together. She did not much frequent the gay society revels, the late hours and exhaustive enjoyments unfitted her for her work. At home she and Daisy or Bertie often danced, and there it was a delight, born of the lovely, dreamy motion. She had comprehended with some rare, quick insight that Mr. Howarth did not approve of the hot, eager Bacchante whirls, that translated no grace or poetry from twinkling feet.

At last — is it a word, or touch, or look, or some subtle blending of all? They are in the beautiful drawing-room at the Howarths', where there are perhaps a dozen guests, mostly gentlemen of travel and scientific attainments; a charming woman, the well-read wife of a professor, and her daughter, who has been singing in a most exquisitely trained voice some of the pathetic old ballads of love and death, of waiting and broken faith on the one side, and deathless faith on the other. Is it true in that sweet, mysterious country? Do love and grief walk hand in hand? She raises her soft, shy, troubled eyes; did they

ask a question? Well, he has answered it, and the vague pain has been translated to a heaven-blossoming smile.

The guests had mostly all gone when Fairfax Sherrard walked down to a table strewn with some pen-and-ink sketches of African explorations. There was a curiously proud and eager light in his eyes, and a new depth in his tone, as he said fearlessly, —

“Mr. Howarth, I want to ask your permission, as you are in some sort Miss Marshall’s guardian, to address her honorably. I love her; I wish to make her my wife; I desire opportunities of seeing her;” then he smiled and colored and bowed his head with the gentlemanly deference of one who entreated a favor.

Mr. Howarth glanced at him with an expression between incredulity and surprise.

“I do not know,” he made answer, “whether the right is altogether mine to give. Miss Marshall has a mother —”

“But I wanted you to understand that if I haunted your house I came with honorable intent,” and his clear, unblenching eyes showed it. “I think I am not quite indifferent to her. She is such a child in matters like these.”

Leonard Howarth wished in his heart that she might have remained longer in her cloistered maidenhood. Yet it was the way of the world, and surely this man before him had much to bestow upon a woman, with his hand.

“I hope you are not over hasty,” he began with a vague alarm.

“I have not been hasty;” in the incisive tone of a man who understands quite well what he is about. “And there is no need of my being hasty or in any way hurrying this sweet life out of its pure, gracious unfolding. I shall not desire to marry under a year or two, until I have quite won the heart whose fragrant pulses are as yet scarcely stirred.”

“You have my best wishes.” Could he desire more for

a daughter of his own blood than this perfect gentleman with his generous, kindly impulses, his wholesome life, his unquestioned position and integrity?

"Thank you. The rest I will take in hand some day."

They crossed the room together, with a slow step, and both glanced at the young girl sitting there so unconsciously. Only a moment. A wave of sensitive intuition swept over her soul and flamed up in her face with its rich dye, then a tremor flashed through the palpitant answering pulses.

Sherrard did not single her out for any special good-night. He had an inborn reverent delicacy that would in all cases shield the woman he loved from any vulgar notoriety. There was a quick half wondering glance, settling to fine accord as he left the room. She was too new to such emotions to desire them in any manner intensified.

Presently Celia went up to her room. There was a curious unsteady feeling, as if she had been swept from some secure mooring and had not quite entered the desired haven. She threw herself on her knees beside the bed and clasped her hands over her blushing face. Her tremulous lips did not shape any words, yet she prayed a new prayer for the man who loved her. His safety and well-being would be a part of her daily petition henceforth.

Mr. and Mrs. Howarth discussed it in the dressing-room. There was a sense of exultation in her womanly, motherly soul, that her unpretentious little violet should carry off this scion of an honorable manhood. The wealth did not count for so much in her eyes as the sincere and honest manliness that had not been ashamed to keep itself above the meretricious pleasures, so called, of vigorous and imperious youth. If a thought crossed her mind of the women at Sherrard House, it caused her no uneasiness just then. They could not shut in the world as they shut in and narrowed their own lives.

"I wonder," Mr. Howarth began gravely, "if he under-

stands Celia's position exactly. We have not deceived people, that I can see," and he gave a musing smile, "yet I do suppose there are many ignorant of Mrs. Marshall's business standing, and the fact that no one really knows whether Mr. Marshall is dead. Ordinarily it makes no difference. Some of the greatest painters have come up from poverty and obscurity, and no one is found brave enough or silly enough to fling it into their faces. Before this matter comes to a positive engagement, I want to tell Sherrard the whole truth. If it can make any alteration it had better work its slight grief now."

"If it *can* change his feelings he is a different man than my estimation of him; yet you are perfectly right, Leonard. Celia herself would say so. His course has been delicate and honorable, and we of all others cannot fail to appreciate it."

Yet the next morning Fairfax Sherrard found himself in a curiously impatient mood. He would not go to Mrs. Linthorpe's — somehow he did not want her to read his secret until he had quaffed its first exalted sweetness. It would be like having some rarely sweet confidential letter read by curious eyes. He sauntered through the streets, dropped in at the Club, then bethought himself of the pleasure of choosing a ring for her. It took him a long while, for he proved most exigent. There was a flaw in either the stone or the setting, but at last he chanced upon a most exquisite one and paid the price with such quiet indifference that the man actually stared.

How long the day was! Would the interminable hours never end? When it proved unendurable he sauntered to the Howarths' just in time to see from the corner the *coupé* drive away with two ladies. At least he could leave a message. He rang the bell and the well-trained waiter stood in listening attitude.

"Mrs. Howarth had just gone to drive with a friend. Miss Marshall was in."

"I will see Miss Marshall," he replied gravely.

Here in the long drawing-room she sat last night and answered his look the instant the thought touched both hearts with its magnetic fire. Was there some glamour that might never be again — the pervasive music of the song, the low-burning lights, the soft fragrant atmosphere? Would the garish light of day, so pitiless, destroy the illusion?

There is a glowing fire of cannel coal at one end of the spacious room, the heavy silken curtains temper the wintry sunshine, a great bunch of heliotrope in a jar perfumes the air. He walks down to the fire and leans, in his graceful attitude, with his arm just resting on the mantel, his eyes bent on the portière partly swung aside.

Celia ran softly down the stairs at the rear, and paused a moment in the library to cool the bloom of her cheeks, and entered — coming upon him so unexpectedly that she stood still as a marble statue from some undefined surprise, only never was marble so celestial rosy red.

He took one step, then held her gently in his arms and kissed softly down amid the blushes. Was it moments or a lifetime?

"I have brought your ring," he said, a long while after, in the mellow unsteadiness of voice that a great emotion leaves behind. "And I could only guess at the size — I am afraid it is too large, but the stone is perfect. We can have it reset."

He dropped it into her hand, where it lay quivering like some mysteriously prisoned soul. It gave her a curious, far-reaching sense of life, a connection with some shadowy occult secret.

"It is the only stone I found worthy of you, my pearl of girls," he said, in a voice of vivid tenderness that seemed to enfold her like some sacred raiment.

"Oh, it is too beautiful!" she cried in her rare humility, which was prouder than another's pride.

"Nothing can be too beautiful for you. I looked at pearls, but somehow they seem weak in such a ring. One wants a subtle, enduring strength, that nothing can mar."

Nothing could mar his strength, she thought in a quick flash. Was she quite sure of her own? Did she understand all this far-reaching mystery that was presently to make both lives one?

"Oh, are you quite sure I have made no mistake?" she entreated pitifully, her whole frame quivering with intense emotion. "I know so little—I have lived with my art, and my mother, and I have not even thought of lovers—"

Ah, it is because of this heavenly purity that she must always be so precious to him.

"I shall not hurry you," he returned, with a strong, comforting assurance in his rich voice. "I want you to learn your sweet lesson by slow degrees," smiling down into her brave, innocent, questioning eyes. "There is not one drop in the whole cup of sweetness that I can afford to lose. But we will go on much as before. I will not be the marplot to your genius, of which I shall always be proud,"—exultingly. "You shall have a long engagement if you like,—a year or two at least," and he smiles with a sense of delicious amusement.

"I am very glad." She drew a long breath like a sobbing sigh, and he understood her too well to ascribe it to any other cause than that fine sacred reluctance which he would not have had her without.

They tried the ring presently. Her hand was plump, with a kind of youthful vigor, a characteristic hand, with no weak lines, not too daintily small for life uses, but finely shaped.

"I cannot wear it all the time," she said, with candid seriousness. "It is too beautiful, too precious, and it would jar upon me in the sense of not being in harmony. Only part of my life is here;" and she glanced about the elegantly-appointed room, while a fine wavering flame swept her face.

"You shall be the judge, so that you always wear it for me," he answered softly.

"It is so different from the life I had planned," and there was a sudden tender remorse in her voice. "I had not thought of marrying. I was to make a pretty home for mamma when the others had gone out of it. Ah! if you knew her!" and a certain clear ring vibrated on the soft air.

"I shall know her some day. I can fancy the kind of mother you should have," changing his sentence a little with the remembrance that he knew absolutely nothing of her family.

"She is beautiful, ever so much handsomer than Mrs. Howarth, and noble and strong. When you come to realize what her life has been — well, mine will look like a weak little half-blown violet in the grass to her rich rose bloom."

Celia stood up straight, with a subtle strength and sweetness in her courage that would have compelled respect from others beside a lover. There was no wavering in the fine flame of her eyes, no weak curves in the pure, sensitive mouth, but something more than a daughter's respect and enduring love that would go through tempests and arid deserts if need were.

"You heroic little girl;" and he smiled with delighted approval. "I think I need to realize a little of a mother's holy and unselfish affection. It has not come much in my way, I must confess. I shall be glad to know her, my darling."

They could neither of them see the black shadow in the distance that was to try this love as by fire. Well for us all that there are some moments of unalloyed pleasure, some cup of pure and promising joy, before we come to dregs and ashes, else our faith in the types and shadows of things might fail us in the bitter trial hours.

After he had gone she sat dreaming in a girl's fanciful

way, a new and delicious experience for her. That Fairfax Sherrard was wealthy she was aware, how rich did not once cross her thoughts. Even now it seemed her mother who figured largely in the life to come rather than her lover. Between this and that there was so great a space to bridge over with work and ambition, with prizes won, with aims steady and sure, leading up to a clear, golden fruition. There would be no time, no excuse for mere idle frivolity — that always wearied her. The vigorous and cheerful nature answered more readily to the high and fine illusions of the artistic temperament than to any pursuit of mere physical or sensuous gratification. Still less was there any of that continual rasping struggle to apprehend an unattainable perfection, either mental or spiritual, that wears so many finely-attuned but ill-balanced souls.

Celia Marshall could not talk her soul's secrets over with this, her most honored friend, until her mother's sacred right had first been satisfied. There were callers in the evening, the usual custom indeed. If Mrs. Howarth expected one who came not, Celia made no sign. Graceful, agreeable, doing her part of the entertaining simply, with the gladness and sweetness of youth, and not the airs and languor of a world-wearied woman *blasé* with long amusement.

She meant to return home the next morning, but at the studio she was detained by a visitor endeavoring to make a choice from some sketches for a gift to a friend at a distance. The short midwinter afternoon was drawing to a close when she crossed the well-known threshold. The girl in the store glanced up with a smile as she passed through. The little work-room was empty, but she caught sight of her mother's figure just beyond, and hastened to her with blooming face and beating heart.

What had worked this sudden, awesome change, what had drained the secret springs of this affluent nature,



leaving a kind of death-in-life hopelessness! Celia stared with a chill misgiving at the pale face and eyes heavy with weeping. Like a vision the old years returned.

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" she cried in anguish as the regal head bowed itself upon her shoulder and a long dry sob tore its way up from the mother's soul. There was but one thing that could so crush the bright heroic spirit.

"Mamma, has *he* come back?" Her own voice was so chilled and dreary that she hardly recognized it for the glad sound of the morning.

"He has come back, — oh, my darling!"

Then the mother held her in a long, long embrace, as if their souls grew together with a clasp and bond that no after-life could undo. Now and then that shivering sob, the hardest of all, with no tears to moisten the arid way.

Celia Marshall remembered the fastidious knightly gentleman whose ring was on her finger. He abhorred drunkenness as he would a plague, he would thrust it far from him with an unconquerable loathing. And *she* had this plague spot on her white clean soul by no fault of her own, she must answer for a sin made by another's weakness, his utter disregard not only of himself and wife, but his children, who must perforce accept their inheritance. A spirit of revolt flamed up in her clear, just soul. Not simply that something might intervene between her and her love — the thought of self was farthest from her, but no matter if she relinquished all love, it could not wash away the stain.

"Yes, he has come back," — there was the hysterical sort of repression in her voice as when one has been standing guard for a long while over one's self, lest all shall be swept away, — "and O Celia, not to me! My darling how can I bear it? Why, I would have taken him in a beggar! I would have nursed and cared for him if he had been ill — and he casts me out of his life!"

"Mamma!" It was so mysterious that Celia loosened

the clasp and held her off a little to study the strained, agonized face. "Not to you? Is it worse than anything we ever dreamed."

"It is here — all I know," and she fumbled about the table like one stricken blind. "I took up last evening's paper after the children were in bed — Bertie had glanced it carelessly over, but missed this. Oh, you can guess at the stab."

The *Westwater Gazette* was *the* paper of the town, the *Morning Journal* counting for very little, being cheaper and for the commoner class of readers. The paragraph was folded outward, and the sharp creases told of the still sharper agony made by its studied perusal.

Celia took it to the waning light, and read one of those complimentary notices with which a man is occasionally honored, to the effect that Mr. Thomas Marshall, one of our well-known and esteemed citizens, had returned to *Westwater* after an absence of several years spent at the far *West*, mostly occupied in mining interests; that he had been one of a party of four who had by perseverance and that peculiar pluck the result often of an adventurous spirit, succeeded in finding a new lead in a silver mine that had been relinquished by other parties as not worth the trouble of further explorations. They had all realized handsome fortunes, and Mr. Marshall was now at the house of his sister on *Westminster Place*, recruiting from the effects of the labor and exposure incident to such a life. A party of eminent capitalists had already purchased the mine, which was found to yield even beyond expectations.

Celia Marshall grew still and cold with poignant, despairing anguish. To come home and not to them!

## CHAPTER XVII.

"Tis the old story ! Even the blind world  
Knows not its angels of deliverance."

GERALD MASSEY.

It was true Thomas Marshall had returned to Westwater an esteemed and respected citizen henceforth, since fortune had smiled upon him. If he had returned as poor as when he went away, no newspaper paragraph would have been found to do him honor. There had come in his life one of the turns of luck so little sought for or deserved that one wonders sometimes at the divine law of compensation.

Five and a half years before he had gone as far as his ticket and his money would carry him. Then he had fallen in with a party much in his plight, and they had tramped, begged, worked when they could not help it, drank when they could get it, wandered from place to place, modern Ishmaels with their hands against the restraints of society. Tom had never added positive crime such as robbery or murder to his career, he was hardly the stuff out of which desperadoes were made.

In a certain way he enjoyed the adventurous life. It was not so bad to go hungry or in rags when beyond the ken of watchful civilization, and even drunkenness held a certain status of its own. Over in the mining regions there were no women to have heartaches at the degradation of the men who had once been heroes to them. Tom had now and then a streak of luck as a camp follower, or he came in deserted places after the fashion of roughing it, and for a few weeks lived in clover on what others had left behind.

In this way he and a comrade had chanced upon what had once been a place of high hopes, but was now a collection of ruined shanties and a mine that after being worked awhile had come to an abrupt termination. Now and then some enterprising miner would turn up a promising bit of ore, but the place had been honey-combed and left in disgust by the larger fish. Long Forks, as it was called from the peculiar conformation of two little streams, had become, in vulgar parlance, played out.

Here and now Tom Marshall's life of dissipation and exposure began to tell upon him. The splendid physique that should have taken him past the four score and ten years had endured to its uttermost and collapsed. There was a long illness when the rough fellows in their moments of partial sobriety nursed him with a good deal of tenderness. Occasionally the doctor from some thirty miles above rode down and left a little medicine or a little nourishment that he must otherwise have gone without.

What did he think of in those long days and wearisome nights? Not much, except the present discomforts, the wish for a cooling drink or fresh clothing, the latter a luxury not attainable. No poignant remorse haunted him, luck had been against him, that was all. He had no special desire to live, and in his sodden brain there was no particular fear of death. As for the old ties, — well, here he was, and there they were, — doing well enough, no doubt, Eleanor, possibly married again by this time.

After awhile he began to mend, so that he could crawl out into the sunshine. Lying around, listening to the marvellous "finds" and "leads" that were told over, he began to take a curious interest as one of the men, Sandy Jim, who still had faith in Long Forks, dug and hunted and grubbed about. He did not even have the enthusiasm of belief, and yet one day he stumbled over something queer, to say the least. For days he toiled until he found he

could not make the desired headway alone, when he called Sandy Jim to his assistance.

How many things have evaded honest, persistent labor, to drop into the hands of some one who has neither sowed nor reaped ! It seems a travesty on the old curse, when the sweat of the brow often brings forth only thorns and thistles. A week later Sandy Jim and Tom Marshall had struck "luck," and bought out the share of their companions. Three months afterward they in turn retired, if not fabulously wealthy, with a reasonably large fortune, and Long Forks was again the scene of mad, eager activity.

Thomas Marshall went to a noted physician in San Francisco and paid for the truth.

"You have used yourself pretty hard, my friend," said the keen-eyed, gray-bearded man. "You have had a magnificent constitution, and you have sapped it by villainous liquors. Strange that a man will ruin soul, body, intellect, all that he has, for the mad passion of intemperance. If you care to go on, six months of it will finish you. Any friends or family?"

Thomas Marshall nodded affirmatively.

"Eastward?" laconically.

Another nod as brief as the word.

"I should advise you to return to them. With a little care and the comforts of a home there may be some years before you. I know how this generally ends, I've seen it times enough. You look above the level of rough crowds. What is there in them that can hold a man of even average refinement? There are the two courses open before you."

Tom Marshall paid his fee, went off with a half laugh, and for a week never drew a sober breath, for many weeks never left his bed. All this time the doctor was rigorous. He came back to a gleam of common sense, and, when he was able to travel, settled his affairs and turned his steps eastward.

According to most theories of reformation he should have been filled with remorse at the thought of his long-suffering wife, but he had held a dull, grudging hate at the worst of times, and it seemed to grow keener as his brain cleared. She had left him and gone her way to make money. If she had prospered — why, then she did not need him. If she were poor and suffering — and there was his boy! A dim sense of fatherhood stirred within him.

If he had found her hard worked and friendless, he would have liked nothing better than being a princely hero. He had a vague kind of fear down deep in his heart that there were wrongs money could not heal, and that he could not fail to read them in her clear eyes, even if they never passed her lips. He hated the sense of abasement when the world in general was ready to do him honor.

He reached Westwater quite undecided. After a dinner at one of the chief hotels, where he had taken a room, he sallied out. It was evening now, and the streets were lighted, many of the store windows were a flash of brilliance. There was a general thriving air in the business streets, and people were hurrying to and fro. No one looked at him, or if they did they would not have recognized in this thin, pale man with beard and hair well whitened, the gay, jaunty, jolly Thomas Marshall of other prosperous days. Down Main Street he walked. Old stores had been made over with iron fronts and plate glass, new ones had been erected, but here was the old place with its unpretentious sign — “Mrs. E. Marshall.” She was not married then! He had been turned out of this place — how the remembrance rankled! but he would *not* remember that he was in no state to meet any delicate woman, with breath reeking with vile whiskey. The mental poise of Thomas Marshall’s character had an obliquity toward self-love and self-pity. The few pangs others had

made him suffer quite extinguished any trifle of anguish he had caused another. He walked slowly past — there was a girl behind the counter, was it one of her daughters? — he did not say *his* daughters. Certainly it was a bright, showy store, with evident marks of prosperity. Just then a dark-eyed, rosy-cheeked lad ran in eagerly, — ah, that must have been Bertie! Something stirred his heart then.

He walked down quite a distance and then sauntered slowly back again. Two persons were standing in the door now, quite an elegant young man of three or four-and-twenty, and a tall, stylish girl with a society air and a certain aplomb, as if, somehow, meekness might not be her chief virtue. Brilliant, too, with fair hair and eyes that were deep, clear, and strong — they gave him a curious shock, as if of half fear. The young man opened the door.

“Good-night, mamma; good-night, Bertie,” said the fresh, well-cadenced voice, as she finished buttoning her glove and stepped into the street, taking the gentleman’s arm. Graceful as her carriage undeniably was, it had a certain resolution.

Which one of the girls could it be? Celia, of course. Little Daisy — well, Daisy could never have quite that air and manner, as if she could ride down all in her way with no compunction. Neither could that be Daisy in the store. Celia, he remembered — and he shrugged his shoulders with a sense of uneasiness. Celia and her mother were always cossetting together.

Still he did not go in. There was his mother, too. She had been tender and sympathizing with him. Suppose he went to her first; there would be nothing to rasp a fellow in her gentle demeanor. Ah, that was a bright thought. That she might not be among the living never once occurred to him.

So he rang the bell at Westminster Place, and was

ushered into the drawing-room. "An old friend," he sent up word to Mrs. Marshall. Some moments elapsed before she came down; she had been guessing, after the manner of women, to whom the description could apply. When she did enter she glanced uncertainly, and a puzzled look came into the placid face, fair still, but perhaps a trifle more wrinkled.

"Mrs. Marshall, you said," and she paused, perplexed.

It came to him with a shock that she really did not know him.

"Mother!" he exclaimed; "Mother!"

"Oh," with a cry, "surely it is not Thomas!" Then she stretched out her hands blindly, and would have fallen if he had not caught her.

"Thomas," she said tremulously, "dear, dear Tom."

She might not have enjoyed taking care of him in illness and poverty, but he felt sure that, as matters stood at present, she would never upbraid him. But would Eleanor? Ah, it is so much harder to forgive the people we have sinned against.

Mrs. Vanduyne was quickly summoned. There had been a great change in Tom. He wore the livery of a gentleman, and she noticed that his clothing was of an expensive kind; that a small but elegant diamond gleamed in his shirt front, and a magnificent seal ring upon one finger,—just the jewelry he wore in old times. There was no sign of absolute intemperance. In fact he was quite a creditable prodigal, and one might receive him, if one did not go so far as to order the fatted calf.

They went upstairs presently to Mrs. Marshall's room, it was so much more cosy. Tom soon told them about the Alvaredes mine, and with no great ostentation, but some natural pride, informed them that he had not come back to be a burden on anyone. That thawed the last vestige of Mrs. Vanduyne's little frost. She was pleased, too, that he should come to them at first.



When he finally rose to go, she insisted upon his remaining all night. There was plenty of room, and he looked so delicate someone ought to begin to care for him. Would he have anything?

It was so homelike and comfortable in this warm room, and then he did enjoy being made a hero of once more, being adored in his mother's pretty, lavish manner. He remained all night; he was really quite charming over the breakfast table; his world had widened a good deal in these years, and he indulged in something more refined than the vernacular of saloons.

By daylight they saw that he was greatly broken. He looked quite old, and fine wrinkles were beginning to thread his face. Indeed, now he resembled his mother much more than anyone would ever have imagined, and he had come to have a kind of toned-down air that added to his gentlemanly aspect. He coughed a good deal, which distressed his mother greatly, and she evinced much tender solicitude.

Some time after breakfast he spoke of his family. "I was not sure but I should play the old romance over again, so I thought it best to be a little wary. Divorces are such an ordinary way of settling family difficulties."

"I have never inquired particularly into Mrs. Marshall's business or family affairs," replied Katharine loftily. "I never wholly approved of her course in either respect, for it seems a woman's duty to uphold her home, not to destroy it. I do not think you were right, Tom, but she might have been more patient and kindly. A woman's virtues are pre-eminently those of the fire-side; the influence of a good home is incalculable, the happiness and well-being of not only one individual but of the whole world depends upon it. I never did approve of women who are so desirous of contesting the part of money-making with men, or who are anxious to achieve a success outside the line of pure womanliness."

Mrs. Vanduyne delivered this in a kind of lecturing fashion, but it had a fine and noble sound to Tom.

"She has been — lucky, I suppose?"

"She has managed to get some of the best trade in the city, but her own folks do not countenance her at all. Oh, of course she dresses like a lady, and holds up her head with a grand air; you know Eleanor always had a magnificent bearing, as if she were posing for tableaux. She has educated the elder girl for an artist, and I believe *she* has been taken up by some swell people in New York, who make a great pretence to art and all that;" and Mrs. Vanduyne gave a bitter-flavored laugh.

"But, Tom ought to let by-gones —" interposed mild, weak Mrs. Marshall, when her son interrupted her with, —

"I'm not going to hold any special grudge against Eleanor, though I can't say I was treated altogether rightly. I was in a bad way, but there had been such a deuced run of luck that I became completely discouraged. Still, you see, I wasn't so bad but what I could reform, and I had sense enough to make money again when I had a fair chance, and now I do not mean to fool it away. I shall have enough to last my time out, and a good bit to leave to whomever I choose."

Tom Marshall uttered this with a kind of magnanimous pride, as if, having done so much for himself without any aid, he might grandly forgive minor sins against him in the days of his misfortune. As for the major sins, he would take his time about them.

"And I am not going to prejudice you in any way about your wife, Tom. I hope I am not so small to my own sex as that. You must forgive her or not, entirely upon your own responsibility. I think she did treat mother shamefully when she went to offer a home for you and the family."

"Offer a home?" cried Tom in surprise. "This is the first I have heard of it."

"Oh," answered Katharine, with a touch of fine indifference, "it was a cottage I had, but you would all have been welcome to it."

"You were very good, I am sure." Tom could afford to be grateful now. He could afford to have a good many virtues, since he was a rich man.

"I am sure if Eleanor had come to me in any trouble I would have befriended her always. Mother was very sympathetic, too. But she chose her own way, and even the Wilders could not turn her from it. It was a fine mortification for them; and Celia has managed somehow to be hand in glove with several of their stylish friends. Do you remember the Van Cleves and the Chantreys? I should n't be at all surprised if you had Percival Chantrey for a son-in-law. He has come home from the four quarters of the globe, and is settling himself in law and politics, and writes up the social questions of the day; in short, is a high moral hero; though I believe the Mountjoy girls are pulling straws for him as well. They do rather hang on hand, for girls who are taken everywhere."

No, clearly Eleanor had not much need of him, she was doing so well for her family.

"Do you know anything about my boy?" asked Tom, and there was a touch of softness in his voice.

"Oh, I suppose he will be gifted with a genius, too," and Katharine laughed. "The other girl, Daisy, aims at music. Nothing short of a *prima donna* will content her."

They arranged that Tom should have his trunk sent from the hotel, and accept their hospitality until he was settled, or had made up his mind just what to do; so he rose to prepare himself for a morning walk.

"I wish you would see a doctor about your cough, Tom," said his mother, much troubled.

"It is a trifle worse than usual," he admitted. "But I have been travelling so much of late, broken of my rest

and all that. A little steady living and sleep will soon set me up. I can't take life as I used, but there is no need of that any more. I shall look about town awhile, so don't wait lunch for me."

Mrs. Marshall wiped away a few tears when her son was gone, proud as she was to see him look so like a gentleman.

"But he's broken dreadfully, don't you think so, Kate?" she asked with agitation.

"All that western mining life is very hard," said Mrs. Vanduyne. "It is so exciting that men forget they are not made of iron. And I wonder if the climate has n't a tendency to turn people gray? You know how dreadfully Mrs. Lessing's hair turned the two years she was in California. But I do think Tom had better see Dr. Breintnall."

Thomas Marshall managed to pass his wife's store about noon, and caught a glimpse of his son. He was a pretty, manly little fellow, as yet not large of his age. Somehow the father coveted him. The girls would soon marry; no doubt they had been brought up to hate and despise him, but he had always loved the little lad. He would like to do something for him. It was hardly fair for Eleanor to have all the children, even if they were separated.

He met an old friend or two, and in one instance mentioned his return from New Mexico.

"See here, Marshall, are you the fellow that struck a fortune in that Alvaredes mine? I saw the name in some paper, but I had no idea of it being anyone I knew."

Marshall confessed with a rather pleased laugh.

"Come in and let us hear about it. Made a pile, did n't you, only I should have held on. Those fellows will double your figure in no time. What will you take?"

"It's a bad habit and I've left it off," with a dry, indifferent smile, as if it had been the easiest thing in the world to leave off. Indeed, it had not been as hard as he

fancied. Since his second illness he had lost all relish for liquor. The very smell of it turned him sick.

The news spread rapidly. Thomas Marshall had made a fortune in silver mining in the five or six years he had been west. Then some one made a readable newspaper paragraph and that was the first intimation Mrs. Marshall had received.

For somehow it was very difficult for Tom to decide the matter. There was the going frankly to Eleanor and asking her forgiveness for that old time, and offering the best he had now for her acceptance. But after all, *had* the fault been exclusively his? He *could* have left off drinking before, if there had been — well, any *strong* influence. Eleanor used to cry a little and nag at him, he remembered, and that Mrs. Beach had made trouble. Some one had lent or given Eleanor money — who could it be? Perhaps some of the men who had boarded with them long before. They had lent him money, he remembered with a sense of shame.

Thomas Marshall had not enough pride to be manly, and too much to believe that he could have been so deeply in the wrong. The shame and degradation after Eleanor had left him had been so much deeper, the first part looked pardonable by contrast. If he had done those things then, she would have been justified in her step. Secretly he knew that she *was* justified, but he was quite willing to confuse his moral perceptions of right and justice. There was mercy, charity, long-suffering, there was a wife's devotion, the theme of almost every tongue and pen, there was the sacred influence of home. That he had been saved without any of these was certainly *not* owing to Eleanor. It seemed as if in failing to save him she had failed in wifely duty. And she had gone away, she had absolutely forbidden him her home. After all, how many men here at Westwater, men of means and position, often came home drunk to their wives. It was

shameful, of course. Tom Marshall would have given anything to go back to the year of the failure. But the trouble had begun before that. Even as a prosperous man he would not have been temperate.

Mrs. Marshall, with motherly solicitude, insisted upon the interview with Dr. Breintnall, their family physician. He came and made quite an examination.

"I know my heart is a little out of order," said Mr. Marshall, "and my lungs have been weakened from exposure, but I come of good stock. My father died in the prime of life by a fever, but his brothers and sisters are hale, hearty people, and though my mother has a fragile look, she wears well."

"Yes," returned the doctor pleasantly. "Your lungs *are* weak —" how much would it do to tell the man? If he took good care of himself he might last — well, life *was* uncertain at the best. "I think the air is rather strong for you here. I wish you would try Florida for about two months, but do not return until the last of April. And take some comforts of your own with you. Have a horse and ride. Eat good nourishing food and plenty of ripe fruit, and go to bed early. Sleep all you can. This will be better than any course of medicine."

"And very pleasant to take. Thank you," and he shook hands delightedly with the doctor, while his face glowed with hopeful anticipation.

"Not a bad idea," he said to Katharine. "These winds are awfully sharp, and March always was a trying month at Westwater. I don't fancy going alone —" and a touch of dissatisfaction crossed his face. "In fact, you have made it so delightful for me that I really hate to change."

"Why, mother and I might go. I should enjoy it, and then it is quite the style nowadays. But — may be you ought to take your wife, Tom? It is her dull time now, and she might surely trust her two girls with the business, if she has brought them up to be any help at all to her."

There was the slightest inflection of contempt in Mrs. Vanduyne's tone, and the suggestive inference that Eleanor might not choose to go.

"I don't know that I feel equal to going over the pros and cons of the case," Tom answered slowly, "and the doctor said I was to avoid all excitement. Eleanor has shown herself quite capable of getting along without me, and she went away of her own will. Yes," reflectively, "I'd like you to go, but I want to see my boy. Why not take him? In fact I'm not sure but I ought to relieve Eleanor of the further care and expense of his education, even if she would not desire to have me do anything for her."

The tone was quite as if Eleanor had refused this small favor.

"He is a pretty little fellow," said his grandmother. "I saw him out in the Van Cleve carriage some time ago, and he looks very spirited and gentlemanly."

"I've had two or three glimpses of him," confessed Tom. "Yes, I want to see him. Bertie always was fond of me."

"What if she should refuse?" questioned his sister.

"Let me see — Bertie isn't fourteen yet. The law, I think, can adjudge him to either parent. I certainly am able to care for him —"

"Tom, see a lawyer before you take any step, and try not to get into a quarrel. Family quarrels are odious."

"Good advice, Kate, I *will* see a lawyer, and I shall make no trouble if I can have my boy peaceably. I'll take him the next five years — that will be only fair play."

"Aldenshaw attends to my business. You would like him, I know."

"I must have a man of business, too. My estate is rather large for a gentleman of leisure to bother with," and he laughed.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Come then, wrap yourself up, and having given your mind play with subtlety, revolve your affairs little by little."—ARISTOPHANES.

WITH some peculiar tenderness of intuition, Celia Marshall appeared to realize the weight of the blow that had fallen upon her mother. There was no selfish desire for the fortune; indeed, she only looked at it as something which rendered the stroke more cruel. That she should have toiled for him through the years when he was a burden and a disgrace, and took her earnings and his relatives' charity quite as the proper thing; that she should have cared for her family through the most trying and expensive period, and that now he should withhold his means and sympathy. They did not need them. Celia experienced a swift, exultant sense of joy that she was able to do for herself, that she would never need ask a favor of the father who had done so little for her.

"Hillo, Celie!" cried a gay voice. "Oh, aren't you going to stay?" with a tone of dismay that was amusing.

"Why, yes;" kissing her brother's rosy face.

"Then take off your cloak, and your mittens, and your rubber boots," laughingly, while he proceeded to do the same. "Day's gone out. Seems to me she's always down to the Galbraiths', mother."

"Can't you afford your sister two more letters," and she tried to smile. "And you know I like you to say Mrs. Galbraith's."

"But she goes to see the girls, and there's three of them, and Mrs. Galbraith makes four, and Tracy makes five;" whereat Master Bertie laughed as if there was



some secret amusement in it, but his mother was too sore at heart to check him.

Celia pulled off her glove with her beautiful ring inside, and slipped it in her pocket, then laid aside her wraps. It was Kitty's afternoon out, so Mrs. Marshall rose and filled the kettle. Then a friend called in the store to see her, and Celia arranged the tea-table.

"I can't bear everybody to go out," complained Bertie. "It's so awful poky. Say, Cele, don't you think I am big enough to go out awhile in the evening? All the other boys do, and they have such fun."

"Then you would have to stay in afternoons and study your lessons," returned his sister.

"Oh, hang lessons! If I were rich —"

"Well, what then?"

"I would n't study lessons, you may bet high on that."

"O Bertie, mamma does not like you to use slang; and we should all be sorry to have you grow up a dunce. How would you get the pony and all the nice things you long for if you did not know enough to earn any money?"

This was a poser to Bertie, and he hopped around on one foot as the best means of reaching the solution.

There was supper, and some lessons afterward in which Celia had to help; then the washerwoman brought the clothes and had quite a pathetic story to tell about her little girl's illness; then a customer came in to give a mourning order, and could hardly conclude to take anything so severely plain as a mourning bonnet, but was comforted with the thought that in three months' time she could add some "jet flowers and things" if she desired it very much. Meanwhile Celia had put Bertie to bed, and now the mother and daughter resumed their sad communing. Tender clasps and tears, touches of that intense and electric sympathy that made this child so dear, since one did not have to clothe one's anguish with words.

The lights had been turned low in the store some time, when there was a quick turn to the knob and a light step, with a pretty call like a note of music. Daisy Marshall locked and barred the door, and came through with the alertness that always characterized her movements, the kind of bird-like, quivering suddenness that was fascinating in its grace.

"Ah, Célie!" she always gave it a little French touch that sounded most musical, stooping to kiss her. "Mamma,—why you look fagged out and headachy; what is the matter? And I've *such* news for you, you must hear it to-night. I am,—oh, what *do* you think!" and she pirouetted around the room. "I am engaged to be married,—at least Tracy Galbraith asked me coming home, and I said,—oh, I don't know what," coloring vividly, "but it means marriage all the same."

"Daisy!" exclaimed her mother in amaze.

"Positively, mamma, I never dreamed of such a thing. I mean—I knew he liked me a good deal, and that all the Galbraiths did, but I didn't even know whether he would be at home; it was a visit exclusively to the girls to help them with their party dresses, and oh, the dear blessed girls, they never do have an idea, even if they possess the best hearts in the world. And when about nine o'clock Tracy begged me to start, as he had something to tell me on the way, I did not suspect it was this. Well, he loves me," and she laughed in part to divert attention from the vivid blushes, "and I *like* him a great, *great* deal, but I have something left, a little I am holding back to give him by-and-by,—some of it perhaps not until after we are married, when I may bring it out to smooth rough places, if there are any. You see they were talking me over the other day, and Mr. Galbraith said if Tracy happened to get as good a wife he would be fortunate, and Tracy took it as consent and advice as well," laughing out of her sparkling eyes. "So,—well, it came about,

and he will be here to tea on Sunday, mamma, and ask you, and then we will be regularly engaged."

"But you are so young, Daisy!" and the mother sighed.

"O mamma, I *have* heard of girls who were married at seventeen;" and she made a dainty little *moue*. "It is only because Célie is older and has never had a lover." At this Celia Marshall's cheeks flamed hotly, and she thought of the diamond that burned in the depths of her pocket in solitary splendor. "And mamma, I shall be so well provided for that you will never need feel anxious about me. Of course the Galbraiths are 'in trade,' as Aunt Wilder and her set would say, but so for that matter are we. They are a good old Scotch family, honest and upright, plain and true, with lots of money at their back. Mr. Galbraith gave James a pretty cottage when he married, and furnished it, and he will no doubt do the same for Tracy, so I shall have a home of my own immediately. I think he will not desire a *long* engagement," and she made another amusing face, "so we will have to be thinking about the trousseau, and oh, mamma," her face suddenly full of the wildest astonishment, "why did no one read last evening's paper? There is something so strange in it, but it is all true. Where is it?"

Daisy flew hither and thither, but her mother, making a great effort, said, —

"Yes, I know —"

"That papa had come back? That he was rich? Why is he at Aunt Kate's? Mamma, are you really separated? Have you no right —"

Her voluble questioning ceased a moment as she caught sight of her mother's distressed face. She came nearer, and clasped her arms about the drooping form.

"Oh, mamma dearest, can it never be made up between you? I can remember — it *was* dreadful, but he is — a Mr. Leeds, who used to know him, said he was altogether changed."

"Mr. Leeds — yes," she gasped. "What else did he say?"

"That papa had been ill and was greatly altered, that his hair and beard were nearly all white, and he looked quite a grand old gentleman. But he isn't old! Oh, mamma, can't you send for him, or something?"

"Daisy," cried Celia, "do not torture her! It is papa's place to come to her. She never committed any sin against him."

It was Celia now who held her in a strong, but trembling clasp, and whose very words seemed to reanimate her shivering soul.

"Well, I am sure," began Daisy, studying them both in a deeply puzzled manner and feeling in a certain sense aggrieved, "something will have to be done. I suppose people are talking about us, all over. Mamma, I must tell you that Mr. Galbraith said you were just right, that about one woman in a hundred would have had the courage to do as you did, but that now he hopes it will be made up, for all our sakes."

"But if he never comes, if he never writes!" cried Celia in desperation.

"Then he will be the cruelest man alive!" and Daisy's eyes flashed.

"Oh, children, I cannot talk about it." Mrs. Marshall rose, but swayed so that Celia clasped her arm about her for support.

"You must go to bed, dear. Daisy, let us fasten up the house. You sit here until we are ready," to her mother as she placed her back again in her chair.

"It can make no difference to me," said Daisy decisively. "I should never give up an honorable loyal lover who chose me when I was poor, and the Galbraiths are very well off. Think what a fortune that business will be for the three sons! But it is said papa discovered or some way had a share in a silver mine, and it may be any-

where in the neighborhood of a million. If he remains cross with mamma he ought to send us all a handsome present. But don't you think he *must* come, Celia?"

"I don't know how he could have stayed away a whole week. There, let us put it away for to night, or we shall kill mamma. All is ready now."

Mrs. Marshall tottered up stairs. Celia's fingers it was which gave such gentle assistance, that folded away her little belongings. Daisy was restless and fluttered hither and thither. They were glad to have her settle into bed. She gave a few happy thoughts to her lover and then fell asleep. Celia listened to the irregular sobbing breath, and held the cold hand tightly in her own.

Yet lying there in a sleepless, intense mood, she felt thankful that Daisy had made her election and was happy. The Galbraiths were well known and highly respected, the head of an extensive steel manufactory, sturdy, honest, solid people, who spent their money in a useful, comfortable manner. There were three sons and three daughters, the eldest son married, the eldest daughter engaged to a clergyman, but all the girls were extremely fond of Daisy. They thought her the prettiest, brightest, most amusing, and such an extraordinary clever girl. That she could make her own dresses, that she could embroider and crochet and devise all manner of pretty home trifles, sing like a bird and dance like a fairy, and never get tired or cross, that she could arrange the daintiest lunches and teas, and always knew just what was pretty and proper to wear, rendered her a marvel to them. They had always been store customers, and Mrs. Marshall had allowed Daisy a wider latitude with them because they were so exceedingly honest and steady, but certainly if adoration could have turned one's head Daisy had enough of it. Other young people, especially young men, found her very attractive. Indeed it had quite troubled Mrs.

Marshall, who knew the season of lovers must come. Celia had been her confidant in all her little worries.

And now Celia thought of her own lover. There were so many complications in her life. She considered what step would be best to take — and saw herself drifting away from Fairfax Sherrard. Why did she not experience a deeper pang? Had she been too thoroughly shocked and stunned?

One point she settled upon immediately. He must know the exact truth, and she could tell it better than anyone else. Then — if he wanted her — yet there would be a pang at his going out of her life. Like a strain of distant music his harmonious nature seemed to float before her, his tender voice, so deep, so rich in the greater moments, his delicacy so perfect. How strange that, coming home to tell her secret, Daisy should have distanced her with a like confession.

The following morning Mrs. Marshall was really ill with a severe headache. Celia looked after the store and her mother, and Daisy took charge of the house with the assistance of the small handmaiden who gave them her days and went home every evening. It was dull times, and a dull gray day with a storm looming up on the horizon. Only one or two people dropped in for some trifle. Jennie, the youngest girl, came regularly, and made the mourning bonnet with a little overlooking.

Celia found a few moments in which to confide to her mother the romance that had befallen her. There was no elation, indeed, the mother's heart ached over so sad a beginning.

"It is quite right to tell him all, my darling;" and she kissed the pure, sweet face.

That afternoon the storm commenced and went over into the next day, but Sunday dawned royally. Mrs. Marshall was up again and in her usual health, but Celia read the strain in the tense eyes, in the pulses that started

when the door opened. No one came. For the first time in a long while Mrs. Marshall remained at home. She could not face a curious world even at church. And somehow, she could not relinquish the hope that with a clearer brain the old affection would return. He must know when so many sins had been forgiven, when only the one condition had been interposed, that he would find a welcome. She thought of the tender, loyal line of conduct she should pursue in his place. Had she idealized his virtues as well as his strength and love? She never thought Thomas Marshall cowardly or selfish when in his right mind, but with a vague, sad foreboding she felt destined to suffer from both. Yet if he has had the strength to give up his overwhelming, unreasoning desire for liquor, that surely is something. What if part of her prayer only is to be answered, that he is to be saved, but not for her? What if this is to be her punishment for the impatience of the past? Yet if they had gone down and down, what would have snatched him from that horrible blackness?

It was well that compulsion roused her from pondering over life's unutterable mystery and the strange bonds wherewith one seemed to be bound. Here was brilliant, gladsome Daisy with her new life in her young hands, full of belief, trust, hope, and anticipation. Not that she was looking merely at the dignity of married estate, — Daisy was too shrewd for that. It was to Celia she confided her lover's virtues, certain that they would pass over to her mother with large interest.

"The Galbraiths are such a good, solid family, and I do not see that it is such a great credit to a man not to work; indeed, most of the splendid men *you* know employ their time about something. Three generations have lived here in Westwater, with credit to themselves and the town. There has never been a lazy, dissipated, vicious man among them, which is a great deal more than many rich

families can boast of. And they are rich, although they do not make a great show, yet who wants better velvets and satins than Mrs. Galbraith, even if she does n't spend five or ten dollars for a French flower. And the boys have good, practical educations — Tracy, you know, graduated from Cornell. Then they all get a regular business training. Mr. Galbraith is my ideal of a sensible, practical father, and he is fond of his children, too. They are all well-mannered people. No one of them was ever allowed in rudeness to another. And some people who fancy themselves the very *crème*, do behave atrociously. My belief is that a lady will be a lady anywhere, like Mrs. Van Cleve. A lady's manners are ingrained, she is so accustomed to them that she never has to put them off to rest;" and Daisy laughed. "Célie, I have resolved upon one thing — if I get so rich that I have outriders to my carriage — when I go into a store I shall take my best manners with me. There may be some clerk who has been reared to the purple and lost it — I think even people like ourselves can tell the difference, and I suppose we are a little *bourgeoise*, are we not," archly, "since we belong to trade. And I made up my mind long ago that I should never marry a poor man, a dry-goods clerk on ten dollars a week. If you could get rent and provisions for love, it would do very well, but they have always to be paid for in cash — if you are poor. Oh, what lots of humbug is talked about marriage!" and the young philosopher drew her brows down to a thoughtful crease. "It is just as necessary to consider that, as any other step in life. And I have found most of the qualities I care for, and have sense enough to see it. Tracy isn't one of the high romantic kind who can scribble poetry and all that, but I am not poetry-struck myself; and I have remarked that some of these young men who cannot live without some particular girl and make such a tremendous fuss, are very easily solaced by another girl when matters go wrong.



It is as easy to love a nice, moral, sensible young fellow, as one of your flighty heroes."

Daisy Marshall looked extremely pretty airing her girlish creed. Where did she get so much worldly wisdom, Celia wondered? How had she come to think the subject over, when until a few days ago it had never entered her — Celia's — mind. There was not the exquisite sacredness, and yet Daisy had practical truth on her side. So many girls married poorly, thoughtlessly, and dropped down almost to the dregs of life.

The young lover made his appearance at mid-afternoon. He was three and twenty, very well looking, but with nothing to distinguish him from the generality of young men, unless it was the rather crisp business air. That he was very much in love was soon evident; his father had kept a somewhat sharp eye upon him.

"I do not mean to have my boys running round after all kinds," Mr. Galbraith said decisively to his wife. "There is as much need of being careful with them as there is with girls. I want them to have some regard worth offering a woman, and I want them to choose someone who will appreciate a good husband, as I mean them to make."

So when Tracy Galbraith began to evince a fancy for Daisy Marshall, both parents were pleased, and gently fanned the flame. As it was his first real passion, it comprehended a good deal of ardor and intensity. He was rather embarrassed at the idea of an interview with *her* mother, and blundered like a big, honest boy, but the very blundering went to her sad heart.

"You are both so young," she said gently.

"But I know my own mind, and Daisy is not like common girls." (Was ever a young man's sweetheart made of ordinary clay? One is tempted to ask where the very material and indifferent wives come from.) "Father does not think there need be a very long engagement; you see

it is not as if I had to get settled in business," with a touch of manful pride. "And," smiling, but blushing furiously, "father will see about a house and all that."

Her heart was touched with gratitude toward these kindly people, who were so glad to have her child. Daisy could unfold rapidly into womanhood; it had been her study so far to keep her as near the sacred cloister of girlhood as possible.

Indeed, she was as dainty and imperious as you please. The supper was almost a work of art. The pretty dishes, that had accumulated by trifles or been the odds and ends of more prosperous times, were arranged as foils to the plain white china. Bertie was adjured to be on his best behavior, Celia was charming, and Tracy Galbraith went home that night more than ever proud of his choice.

The next morning Mrs. Marshall's fate came to her in a different guise from anything she had dreamed. Mr. Aldenshaw, a well-known elderly lawyer of irreproachable reputation, called, and asked a private interview, as he had important matters to lay before her.

"I am charged with a somewhat delicate commission from Mr. Marshall," he began with a preliminary clearing of the throat, and her face lighted with sudden eagerness. "I am aware there are often embarrassments in married life, and — steps that one or the other think justifiable, perhaps unavoidable. Of that matter I have nothing to say, as it was settled so long ago, but Mr. Marshall feels now that he ought to relieve you of some care and perplexity as far as the children are concerned, as he is amply able. He proposes to educate the little boy, — in short, to be a father to him in every respect. His affection for the child seems exceedingly strong. As he is about to start for Florida under the doctor's orders, he would like the child to accompany him."

"To Florida? Is he ill?" Her face was ashen pale, and her voice full of alarm.

"He is not seriously ill, but suffering from some cough, the result, no doubt, of exposures incidental to western life, and coming here at this season the climate seems trying. The trip will probably mend all that."

Eleanor Marshall pondered in a dazed, half-sick manner. To take Bertie to Florida,—the child,—when it was the wife's place and duty.

"Do I understand? He wants my boy, my little darling boy," and her voice rang with a note of anguish.

"I suppose it is *his* boy, also," with a smile meant to be softening and pleasant. "It is not unreasonable, my dear madam, that he should ask for one of his children. The daughters, he considered, would be of much more comfort to you, and were of an age when educational advantages were mostly past, but the boy would still be considerable expense —"

"Does he mean — oh, he *cannot* think to take him from me!"

She clasped her hands passionately, and a steely light of resistance shone in her eyes. All the mother in her was roused to the uttermost. The finely curved lips settled to their haughtiest strength, the cheeks blazed in the scarlet of indignation.

"And did he send no message to me, none?" She sprang up and began to pace the floor, her outraged soul throbbing in heart and brain. "Did he forget he had a wife waiting for him, that his first duty was to her?"

"Mrs. Marshall, my dear madam, calm yourself, I beg;" and Mr. Aldenshaw seemed much perturbed. "As I understood the case, you took the children and went away from Mr. Marshall —"

"I had to go." O heaven, could she enter into those bitter details with a stranger! Could she, even to justify herself, tell over the shameful straits to which she was reduced when a woman like Mrs. Beach would not keep her, or rather *him*, the father of her children, in the house!

"I had to go!" Her voice was unsteady, and came through great swells of anguish. "I begged him to get us a home. You know,—you must know, that at the time—"

He made a gesture with his hand. "The matter is not so uncommon, I am sorry to say; but it is often lived over without any severe measures. It seems—I regret that in your trouble you did not apply to friends. Mrs. Vanduyne, if I understand rightly,"—hesitating a little, as he well knew everyone told the best story on his side,— "sent afterward to offer a home that you might share together, and would have done all in her power to heal the breach. I think myself," and his tone had a little judicial severity, "that a woman makes a great mistake when she breaks up her home."

"There was no home," in a hoarse, strained tone, her hands wringing themselves together unconsciously.

"But there might have been one, you see. It is a point in law. You took the first step, and accented it by the refusal. My dear madam, I would much rather be peace-maker between you and your husband, but he is exceedingly sore on the subject. Time may soften him; I sincerely hope it will."

She sat there astounded, the cold hand of despair freezing her very soul. Did it look like this on the other side? Could he plead so many extenuating circumstances for his cruel conduct! She rose, tall, grand, impressive, her proud face white as marble, and wrung with a desperate pain.

"Then you mean—then he means that the separation is final? Tell him I made but one condition when I went away,—that after six months of sobriety he was free to return; tell him that no day or night has gone by without a prayer for his safety, his salvation; that I have held myself as truly his wife as if he had been ever beside me; that I have cared for and educated my children all these

years, and that he cannot have them now ; that his money even is not enough to buy them from me. Go and tell him that ; it is my answer."

She would have swept out of the room in her passionate indignation, but Mr. Aldenshaw rose as well, and placed himself between her and the door.

"Mrs. Marshall," he began entreatingly, "my dear madam, this is a situation requiring the utmost patience and wisdom. For myself, I have entire confidence that it will end rightly if you can, if you will, study your own best interests. Men are sometimes — well, perhaps we are all prone to a certain one-sidedness, an incapacity for taking the broader view. Can you not use a gentle influence through your child that will so work upon his soul that he may come to view you in the olden light? He is not quite well, he has been away from family ties a long while, and perhaps he *may* have some excuse for his decision. But if you will be guided by me you will let the child accompany him to Florida. The aunt and grandmother will take good care of him, you need have no fear on that score. And he has some plans for his son's education that — in short, he proposes to fit him for college. Let the child be the bond to unite you."

"You have my answer."

Her face had settled into a stony firmness.

"One of those frigid unimpressionable, intellectual natures," ruminated the lawyer. "One touch of pure womanliness would be worth hundreds of such qualities."

"I can take it to him, but it will not be the end. Oh, let me persuade you for your own sake. Mr. Marshall's home and fortune should be yours —"

"That is for him to think of, to proffer. No, rather the honest poverty and toil for my boy, for us all. Take my answer to him."

Mr. Aldenshaw drew a long sigh. She was a very unreasonable woman not to see where her true interests were

centred. Almost any other woman would have thought of the money. He was not at all sure that Thomas Marshall had the best or noblest side of the case, but he was his client, and, being Mrs. Vanduyne's business man as well, he really was committed to this view, but he meant to advise Mrs. Marshall for her best interests, all the same. Half a million was too much money to throw away. He would make one more effort.

"Mrs. Marshall," he began, "there is another point I think you ought to consider. I should not feel that I had dealt fairly with you unless I mentioned it. In any suit for divorce, though I say frankly I have no idea such a step is contemplated, Mr. Marshall would have an important point in the fact that you *did* go away. Can I not persuade you to consider your own interest and be a little conciliatory?"

For all answer she waved her white, firm hand. Mr. Aldenshaw noted how very handsome it was, and that she was a regal kind of woman. Any man might be proud of her. It was a thousand pities they could not agree, for in his secret soul he did not believe Thomas Marshall was destined for a long life. However, talking reason to an unreasonable woman was like whistling down the wind.

Celia sat at her easel in the back room. She started when her mother appeared, so like some phantom of unutterable woe.

"He wants my boy, Celia," she cried in that intensely tremulous voice which showed how highly wrought every pulse had been. "He wants my boy, my little Bertie! To think that nearly always since he has been born I have cared for him, earned his bread, a thing mothers seldom have to do. And now, when a little luck, as he used to call it, has befallen him, he will provide for the child, ruin him with every luxury, for Bertie could be easily ruined, soul and body. Oh, is that all of a father's love, to do when it is no trouble, no exertion? Celia, do you remember that

horrible night when he fed him the whiskey? Oh, I cannot, cannot give him up!"

There was a long shuddering sigh, and she reeled as if some one had struck her a blow. Celia sprang toward her and softened the fall it was too late to prevent, and laid the senseless form tenderly on the carpet while she shrieked for help. She had never seen her mother faint before, and thought she must be dead, but presently a dull crimson flushed the marble face, there was a quiver in the eyelids, a tremor ran through the body, and life returned.

"What was the matter?" asked Daisy in alarm.

"Hush," — and Celia's voice was scarcely less awesome than the sculptured features in their deathlike repose. "Some one came — I do not know. She must go to bed for awhile."

They helped her to her chamber and she sank unresistingly upon the bed.

"Mamma, mamma," cried Celia softly, "I shall never go away, never leave you."

## CHAPTER XIX.

"But it behoves us, indeed, to reflect in the first place that we are by nature women, and not able to contend against men." — SOPHOCLES.

THOMAS MARSHALL was positively angered at the refusal, though, to do Mr. Aldenshaw justice, he used his best efforts to promote mutual concessions. Tom was irritable from many causes. Ill health, and a horrible fear that it might prove a more serious matter than Dr. Breintnall seemed to think. No one knew the intense, overwhelming shrinking from death that pervaded him. When his brain was steeped and dulled with the enervating, sottish effects of liquor, he could have met death with the coolness of utter indifference, so often mistaken for heroism. "He died game," we hear of some miserable soul, in which all but mere brutal instincts have been quenched; but it is the game of the shambles, not the intrepidity of the pit, that fights for victory, as well as life.

His mother and sister exerted an unwholesome influence over him. Loving, tender, and sympathetic, his mother certainly was, but her ideas of right had been trained by society usages rather than on any firm principle, any sense of justice to her neighbor. She forgave Tom so easily now, when he was prosperous and his physical state appealed to her ready pity. If Eleanor only had done this or that; and Tom had not enough manliness to exclaim that she had tried to do it hundreds of times, and he had frustrated all her efforts. Mrs. Vanduyne, with the narrow grudge of some women, felt that Eleanor was being paid back for her unwarranted step. She had taken all the blessings of Tom's early prosperity;



she had utterly refused to share her success in life with him, — had *she* been so ready to shower hers upon her brother in his evil times? — and now, when the tide had turned, it seemed a kind of poetical judgment that she should be shut out of it. One of the other sisters came in town, and added her voice to the general verdict.

“Of course it is right for Tom to have the boy,” said Mrs. Brooke decisively, “His mother would have to put him to a trade, while he ought to be educated for some profession, and then women cannot manage boys. They grow out of petticoat government. They either make molly-coddles or incipient rowdies. There is no knowing what habits he may contract in that station in life, and he does need to be put in his proper position, — that of a rich man’s son.”

All this had a subtle effect upon the half-sick man, and warped his better inclinations. He never asked himself what it would have been had he come home ill and penniless. It was his misfortune that his mind had never been broad enough to take in both sides of a question, though he could take in two aspects of it, but they would both have points of agreement. In his miserable days the pity had been for himself, for his hard luck. Now everyone paid him a curious deference. A man with nearly a million, at least a secure half million, while the other was contingent, was certainly a person worthy of respect, and it did not do to inquire too closely into his past. He had not been quite steady at one time — it had been lopped off to that already, — but no word had ever been uttered against his moral character. In his business misfortunes, all his debts had been honorably paid. He was no robber, forger, defaulter, or swindler, and he had been a jolly, good fellow. His wife, — well, no one knew *just* the circumstances of the separation, but both families had strongly disapproved, so the verdict went against Eleanor.

There was another point in which Tom Marshall ac-

quired a certain respect. He grew wonderfully fastidious, as illness sometimes brings out long-disused qualities. He dropped the vernacular of the bar-room and the mines, and began to despise it. He corrected his errors of pronunciation and elision; he had his old training to fall back upon. He was as much of a gentleman as the best. He used the finest and most delicate clothing, the richest personal appointments. In his early days he had never stinted upon these matters.

So it seemed to him that Eleanor was the only one who refused him any meed of praise for his reform or his money. He had never said to himself that the separation was final, and felt strongly virtuous and heroic in this resolve, for some men would have gained their freedom, and begun an entirely new life. He just temporized with himself, an infinitely more dangerous process. But he learned that he could gain complete control of his son, and he instructed Mr. Aldenshaw to push matters. He wanted to go away, and the case must be decided.

Eleanor Marshall rose from her bed of pain and anguish and girded herself to meet a struggle she knew was imminent, for she still was able to judge her husband correctly. Come what would, she would not give up her son.

Celia, meanwhile, wrote a little note to Mrs. Howarth, giving her mother's illness as an excuse for her remaining at home, and also to her kind friend Mrs. Linthorpe. What she should say to Fairfax Sherrard was a subject of much painful consideration. With the natural delicacy of a finely attuned soul, she shrank from committing such a story to pitiless paper. It would look so hard and uncompromising; even some slight blame might take on the appearance of censure. Could she justify her mother, as she felt her justified by circumstances, without blaming her father in an unfilial manner! One can mention extenuating phases in conversation that might not be remembered in the perplexity of writing. No, she would wait.

Such a matter soon became the theme of gossip. Nothing could exceed Mrs. Wilder's vexation at what she had always considered Eleanor's foolish and lowering experiment. Tom had returned with a fortune and gone straight to his people.

"And if he should commence divorce proceedings," she groaned. "Eleanor *did* desert him, and it has always been a mystery to me where she obtained the money to buy out Miss Caruth. If some ugly facts should come out! Married women cannot be too circumspect. Tom has not been near her, and considering how he went on before the separation, it is most ungenerous of him. I suppose Eleanor *did* insult old Mrs. Marshall that day she went to reason with her, and they all feel aggrieved. Oh, dear! To have such a scandal!"

"And my three daughters just blossoming into womanhood! I have been so careful of them;" and Mrs. Mountjoy sighed. "American girls who enter upon careers like Celia Marshall, or who go traipsing over Europe for husbands, have been so severely criticised that I resolved to show that there were *real* mothers in America; but the more delicately you nurture anyone, the quicker any touch of scandal smirches them. A trouble like that would interfere seriously with their marriage prospects. Divorces have begun to be considered disgraceful by our best people, and if there could only be some law to compel husbands and wives to live together, and not bruit abroad their infelicities to the shame and horror of the respectable portion of their relatives."

"And all that fortune! Eleanor must turn green with envy! Well, it serves her just right, although *I* always leaned more to mercy than judgment, and if praying would do any good, I should pray night and day that Tom might forgive her and take her back. I wonder if he could will all the money away from his family. Kate

Vanduyne has enough now. Oh, what a dreadful affair the whole thing will prove."

"Eleanor ought to go down on her knees to Tom for the sake of hushing up the matter," was the angry response. "Has she no regard for her own children! Oh, how can mothers be so wilfully, wickedly blind!"

They were sitting in Mrs. Wilder's pretty room, Mrs. Mountjoy waiting for her daughters, who had taken the carriage to call upon some friends while she stayed for a little talk.

"I wonder what the Howarths will say now!" went on Mrs. Mountjoy. "Mrs. Howarth, I believe, sets herself up for a sort of censor on divorced people. She actually would not receive that Laura Daly who went to her house twice, it was said, and the second time she sent down word that she could not see her. And Mrs. Daly had the best right to a divorce when Daly went off with a ballet-dancer."

"But her record was not altogether clear, you know."

"There was some gossip," in a lofty tone. "I wonder if she will apply the same rigorous rule to Eleanor?"

"But Eleanor does n't go into society, you know. She has been wise enough not to give society the chance to refuse her, and to depend upon some special invitations when no other guest is invited."

"I certainly would not hang on the hem of society's skirts in that cowardly fashion. Eleanor has none of the family spirit. I think there must have been some off blood in her father. And there are the Van Cleves, and the Brocklehursts. Ada Kingston actually invited Daisy Marshall to a musicale at her house, and not as a professional either, though she sang. And she was allowed to dance! I was so thankful something prevented the girls from going — it would have been horribly awkward. When milliners and such people aspire to society," and

Mrs. Mountjoy's voice expressed the depth and height of the iniquity.

There was a rustle on the stairs, and Alice Mountjoy came in with her card-case in her hand, her face stirred with some touch of eagerness and displeasure.

"Oh, grandmamma and mamma, what do you think we have heard?" and Alice threw herself gracefully into the low rocker. "It was at Mrs. Kingston's, Mrs. James Galbraith was in, and she had the loveliest brown velvet suit, clear silk. And she said that Tracy was engaged to Daisy Marshall, and the family were just delighted."

"Tracy — who?" asked her mother in a tone of pointed rebuke.

"Mr. Tracy Galbraith," flung out Alice rather shortly. "And old Mr. Galbraith will give them a house, as he did for Mr. James. It is too utterly contemptible that girls of that class are allowed to go where they like and pick up lovers."

"Pick them up! that is rather more forcible than elegant, Alice, but we will have to let it pass, seeing that it so exactly expresses the truth. I should be ashamed to have my daughters going around picking up husbands in that manner," responded the mother loftily.

A touch of regret swept the daughter's haughty face, as if, after all, a husband would not be so bad a thing to pick up, and set in the midst of one's life.

"And Daisy Marshall is barely seventeen," said her grandmother.

Alice colored with a sense of secret shame that she should be almost twenty and not even have had one promising lover.

"No wonder we have ill-starred marriages and divorces on every hand," groaned Mrs. Mountjoy. "But the Galbraiths do not rank very high. They are merely manufacturing people."

"But Mrs. Galbraith has a pony phaeton to drive, and

a very pretty house. You know papa said they were talking of Mr. James Galbraith for assemblyman."

"That was merely the labor interest," in a supercilious manner. "They are not really in society."

"I don't know who is in or out of society," declared Alice half angrily. "Miss Galbraith is going to marry Mr. Lasselle, and there is some talk of calling him at Bethany Chapel. The most stylish people go there, and of course they will receive her, they *must*. I don't see what a talented gentleman like Mr. Lasselle can find in that dowdyish girl, only, I suppose, her father will give her some money."

"I am amazed at Mr. Lasselle's choice, when he could have looked so much higher. Clergymen ought to be trained to see that they owe a duty to society in the kind of women they place in such an important position. No class of men suffer more in their selection of wives," said Mrs. Mountjoy in an oracular manner. "And if he and the Galbraiths are called upon to fight their way through scandal —"

"Scandal!" interrupted Alice with an eagerness that did not speak volumes for the purity and refinement of her training. "About whom — Mrs. Marshall?"

"We will let Mrs. Marshall alone in her rejoicing over her prospective son-in-law," returned Mrs. Mountjoy disdainfully, "since she will never be likely to have another opportunity. Men always fight shy of a woman with a career, and a second or third rate artist never commands a very high degree of attention. But Violet is waiting for us," and she drew her fur-lined mantle about her.

Violet looked ennuied and disagreeable alone in the carriage. Her nose was red instead of her cheeks, there were two very decided creases in her brow, between her eyes, which added the aspect of a continual frown, and her lips had settled into an expression of wearisome im-

patience, which she cultivated under the impression that it was a high-bred languor.

"I thought you were never coming," spitefully. "I am almost frozen waiting here."

"I was telling grandmamma the news."

"Tracy Galbraith is the biggest fool I know," was the short rejoinder, which was allowed to pass unchecked, as Mrs. Mountjoy saw that her eldest daughter was in a very bad temper.

Indeed they both felt secretly wounded by the preference of these young men. Violet had met Mr. Lasselle quite frequently, and began to hope that she might possibly attract him, when the announcement of his engagement surprised them. They met the Galbraiths in society, and Mr. Mountjoy always spoke of the male portion of the family in the highest terms. Alice had begun to think that striving for the high matrimonial prizes proved very unsatisfactory, and a lover on the next lower round would be better than none at all. And here that impertinent, pushing Daisy Marshall had taken him almost before her eyes. There was but one solacing view to it — she was out of the way of all future lovers.

The Galbraiths were in no wise ashamed of their son's choice, and saw no reason for keeping it a secret. Indeed they were already speculating on the subject of a double marriage, which would necessitate an extremely short engagement for Daisy.

"She has come and gone, and we know her so well," said motherly Mrs. Galbraith. "Mrs. Marshall is a true lady, and they are well born, as the phrase goes. I'm sure I love her like one of my own daughters, and I have always wanted to feel just that way toward my son's wife. I am so glad Tracy never fancied that Miss Mountjoy who used to send him party invitations. They say her mother is Mrs. Marshall's cousin, but she always looks as if she would like to tread you out of existence."

"The poorest wife a man in Tracy's position can have is a helpless rich man's daughter, whom nothing but reckless extravagance can satisfy. Thank fortune, wife, that two of our sons have escaped such dangers. And I don't know of anyone who will make a lovelier rich lady than Daisy Marshall. I suppose she will have something of her own, too; Marshall, they tell me, is in quite poor health. Why don't the idiot go and make up with his wife — she has been one woman out of a thousand, and he ought to feel proud of her!"

Mr. Thomas Marshall's next move was to serve a notice on his wife, that he should enter a suit for the recovery of his son, if he was not sent to him by a certain date. He would be very sorry to proceed to any extremities, — in fact, no one regretted the unhappy circumstances more than he. She had broken up the home and bereft him of his children at a time when he was unable to make any provision for them, but now he deemed it a duty and a pleasure. The girls, he had understood, had their own life plans, and he did not desire to interfere; but all the boy's education was yet to come, and he wished to give him the training that would befit his future prospects.

Eleanor Marshall did not faint this time. There would be a hard, close struggle, but she would not yield one inch. She dressed herself and went to Mr. Darrow's office, and that gentleman received her with the utmost courtesy. She told her story with a passionate vehemence, and a deep, burning sense of wrong, part of which could in no way be righted, she well knew.

Mr. Darrow drew a long breath. There was not the courageous intensity of hope in his face that she looked for to meet her own magnetic force. Then a horrible, sickening fear thrilled and almost overpowered her.

"Oh," she cried, "he cannot take my child? Surely no law, no justice would give it to him!"

"My dear Mrs. Marshall, let us go over the case.



There are many very hard things in life ; there are laws made for the protection of the innocent that sometimes seem the bitterest travesty in their application. The law, you know, has to take the majority of cases into consideration, and not a few isolated instances, however urgent they may be in righteous protest. You think you will invoke the law ? ”

Her strained eyes, her throbbing pulses, her lips bereft of all color and shut in a thin sharp line, the resolute, undaunted brow, answered him where the words failed.

“ Then we will look to your defence. The law will say — having brought up two of her children honorably and taken care of the little boy for more than twelve years, it is her husband’s duty to relieve her now, unless his character is such that he is not to be entrusted with the care of any child. What does she allege against him ? That he drank at one time, and failed to provide the common necessities of life ? But that is past. He is able and desirous of doing it. He has reformed — so entirely indeed that he does not even drink wine, I am told. Now, can you so blacken his character as to prove him a cruel, heartless, vicious father to-day ? ”

“ I do such a thing ! ” she cried with pure, proud disdain. “ I blacken Thomas Marshall’s character when he may have repented, reformed ? O Mr. Darrow, what can you be thinking of ? ” and her face was an indignant scarlet.

“ You would have to do just that. You would have to prove him notoriously unfit in some way. He is still the father of your two daughters — ”

She sprang up and paced the floor in all a woman’s outraged agony.

“ Then the law is cruel,” she cried, in a voice that pierced his heart. “ Then men are crueller than I thought them.”

“ Listen to me a moment ; ” his tone was soothing yet commanding. “ We will suppose a case. Your husband

is a man of abundant means, and you have three little children. He has left you penniless. There may be reasons why you will accept nothing from him for yourself, but you cannot see your children starve. Here the law steps in and compels the man to support his offspring. He is their proper protector, he has no right to make them chargeable to the state. The law says—you are to pay to your wife and their mother enough for a decent maintenance according to your income. Or we will take this case. It is a very poor woman who is abandoned and appeals to the law. Work and take care of them, says the law, or go to prison and be made useful to the state or county, while it cares in turn for the helpless ones. The father is their natural supporter, their lawful one as well."

"And the law gives them to him under any pretence. Thomas Marshall has never worked for his children's maintenance. I have. Some lucky accident, for it was that, of course, has given him money. He does not ask his wife to share it," and she thrust down the giant sob within her, while her face struggled with varied emotions, every feature being almost sublimed, "but he takes her little boy, her last darling, oh, my God," and she clasped her hands in despair.

He was deeply moved. "If you think it better I will make the bravest fight of my whole life for you. I think it may be possible to so argue the case as to retain the boy, but will the victory be worth the cost? Every point you can bring up to his disadvantage must be used, every heroic bit of energy and perseverance on your part, and the present sad facts—for they are sad in their very cowardice. Can you pay so high a price, Mrs. Marshall? And then, after a year or two, suppose the boy elects to go with his father, and the fight has all been vain!"

She dropped into her chair and buried her face in her hands, but she did not weep outward tears. Great scalding drops of agony fell on her heart like stabs from a keen

sword. Oh, how could any man so strike the wife he had sworn to love and cherish! And the dreary, dreary sequence sure to follow—the preference of the child for luxury and show. A pony, money to spend, journeys,—ah, she need not fight. It would be a waste of strength.

“Do you think any court or judge would offer Bertie his choice?” she asked with tremulous eagerness.

“I think they would be likely to;” reluctantly and with the deepest sympathy.

The case was prejudged against her from the beginning. She saw it with a cold, crushing despair. She had come in so strong and proud in her righteous endeavor, to find that even a mother’s soul could be rent in fragments by men honest enough in doing what seemed to them a common-sense duty.

“Oh,” she implored, with a last effort, gathering all her forces; “advise me, counsel me as if I were your sister.”

“Answer me honestly what you think the choice of the child would be.”

“He would go with his father.”

Her whole soul seemed to come up with that groan.

“Then, do not contest the case. The less publicity that is given to it, the better. Would you under any circumstances live with Mr. Marshall again?”

She shivered as if in the grasp of some horrible hand.

“Would I?” Her voice sounded strangely distant, sepulchral, with all the strength and fervor gone out of it. “All these years I have kept a home for him. I have had a presentiment that he would come back to me to die; how little we can depend upon presentiments,” bitterly. “I would have taken him in poor and homeless, but now—now,”—in a wandering way; then suddenly rising to her full height, and with the old proud poise of the head, while an intense light flashed in her eye,—“now all of Thomas Marshall’s money could not buy me.”

"You would have fallen down and worshipped her, Howarth, in your admiration for strong and noble women," said his friend to him some time afterward. "I never saw such a perfectly glorious picture. It would have made a woman's fortune on the stage."

"For the sake of the two young girls, whom any mother might be justly proud of, I am informed," and Mr. Darrow bowed with respect, "I think it better to avoid any contest or publicity. If, after a year or two, you should think differently and want your freedom, remember that I shall be proud to undertake anything for you; but it seems here as if the chance of reward was not commensurate with the suffering. It may be very noble to fight heroically, but if we are to bring others in to share the pain, it is wiser to pause."

There was a long silence. Mrs. Marshall looked as if she might be turning into marble. Strong, pale, and pure, with the halo of martyrdom, not compulsory but elective.

"I think," she began slowly, and it was the statue speaking, "you may settle it with Mr. Aldenshaw, Mr. Marshall's lawyer, unless you should hear differently from me to-morrow morning. Not that I have any hope; and," rousing herself a little, "I will take nothing, *nothing*. We will go our way, my girls and I."

He offered his hand. Hers was icy cold through her glove. She crossed the floor, went slowly down the stairs out into the street. A short battle, but when one is wounded to the death, of what avail is further struggle, and hope would be but a bitter mockery.

She went straight to Mrs. Van Cleve, without any question of her loyal sympathy. In those true, friendly arms she wept her bitter, agonizing tears. Into this fine, appreciative soul, white as snow itself, she poured her sad story that had only been barely touched upon before.

Mrs. Van Cleve kept her to dinner, and denied herself

to all other visitors. She and her husband went over the ground exhaustively, the one with a woman's indignation, the other with a man's cooler, broader perception, but it was as Mr. Darrow had said,—one law, made for the majority of cases, might miss its way with the one different, yet with the subtle, occult unlikeness quite indescribable.

It was a delight indeed to have this warm human sympathy and approval; to know that here she had won her way by the simple strength of her pure, high soul, so akin to theirs in spite of the outward difference of circumstances. There would be two others who would not fail her in this fiery trial; but they had been so princely generous to Celia that she shrank from offering her burden to them.

She was sent home in the carriage. Daisy and her lover had the parlor to themselves. Celia had been listening to Bertie's hopes and wishes and impatient longings to know something of his rich father.

"O mamma," he cried eagerly, taking no note of her pale and wearied face, "do you not think I might write just a little letter to papa? The boys at school think it so strange that I do not go to see him. Why could n't I, if he is ill? Why don't you ask him here—he goes out riding. I only wish I could see him in the carriage. Would he know me? I was so little when he went away."

She took the child's hand in hers. He was flushed, excited, eager, his cheeks rose red, his parted scarlet lips with a wilful yet imploring expression, his eyes sparkling with that winsome, entreating light, his curly hair thrown back from his fair forehead.

"Bertie," and her voice was solemnly tender, "what if papa should send for you to take a journey with him. Would you go away from mamma and sisters?"

Bertie hung his head.

"Mamma, would you *let* me go?" hesitatingly.

"If I gave you your choice —"

"O mamma," and he dropped her hands to dance round the room in his exuberant joy. "A journey! Where? Out west, may be, to see the mines. When I am a man, mamma, I shall hunt up a silver mine purposely for you. Oh, can I go?" and his voice trembled with excitement. "But he has n't asked me!" not reading any confirmation in her grave face.

The utter change of tone would have been ludicrous but for the sad pathos in it for her. The face settled into childish disappointment, so complete that it was despair, and in another instant the volatile child would have cried.

"He has sent for you," the mother said over the ruins of her heart. "He wants to take you to Florida, to be gone two months, perhaps."

"Oh, mamma! Goody! goody!" — positive slang being interdicted in the house. "And you will let me go? Oh, you are the best mother in the world! I'll bring you home lots of oranges, and — and" — Bertie's remembrance of Floridian products being defective, he consoled himself with — "I'll ask papa for lots of money for you."

"You must never ask him for anything for me, Herbert; promise that, or you shall not go;" and her voice was so sharp that Celia started involuntarily, while Herbert stared. "Never speak of us unless he should ask you, and then only answer his questions. Our lives are nothing to him. Promise, child, promise."

"Yes," answered Bertie, stupefied by the sternness so unusual in his mother.

"Now run to bed. The rest you shall know to-morrow. Not another word."

She did not even kiss him, but when he had gone she went straight to Celia and hid her face on the girl's shoulder, and the two wept softly together.

## CHAPTER XX.

"Wisdom in determining is therefore preferable to courage in fighting."  
—CICERO'S *Offices*.

THOMAS MARSHALL, with his silver thousands behind him, would not have felt flattered if he had been a secret witness to the interview between the two lawyers. Mr. Aldenshaw's opinion was irrevocably changed, but he did not deem it at all necessary to assail his client, indeed, he meant to do some good work for Mrs. Marshall if it was in his power. He simply informed him that Mrs. Marshall had reconsidered and withdrawn her objections. He was at liberty to take the child to Florida. Other questions would be settled as they came up.

"Of course she had n't any show," he said with a touch of amused disdain. "I have the best right to the boy."

Mrs. Vanduyne's carriage was sent early one morning for him to come and spend the day. He returned at night laden with gifts for them all, and stories as wonderful to his youthful brain as Arabian Nights' entertainments.

"Such clothes as papa had bought him; and a real watch, and when he came back he was to have a pony. And he had given him a hundred dollars to spend just as he liked."

It showed the natural selfishness of boyhood — had she looked for the opposite quality? that with all the money lavished upon him he had thought of himself. He had bought two finger rings, but Aunt Kate said he must never wear but one at a time, and no end of trifles. For Daisy a chain and locket, for Celia a pearl ring — Aunt Kate had helped him choose it, and for mamma — some one had

guided his taste here, evidently — a most beautiful miniature of himself in a gilt and velvet easel frame. This touched her as nothing else could have done, softened the heart that seemed turning to stone.

"I did want to buy you a silk dress, mamma. Aunt Kate had such a splendid one, but grandmamma said it cost over two hundred dollars, and I did not have so much. Isn't aunt a stunner! oh, I forgot," — coloring. "And grandmamma is such a lovely old lady with flossy white hair and the sweetest voice, and such an elegant house — and oh, Daisy, you ought to see the servants. They are going to send for me on Friday, and on Saturday morning we start."

"How is papa?" Daisy ventured to ask, seeing that her mother did not.

"Oh, he is pretty well. He coughed a little. He does n't look a bit like the picture, mamma, his face is thin, and his beard is long, nearly all white, and he is — is awfully toney, mamma, do let me say it just once, kind of grand, you know. Of course he likes me, or he would n't have given me all that money —" yet a perplexing reflectiveness crossed the youthful face.

So he too began to measure love by money!

Mrs. Marshall was grave and quiet that evening and all the next day. As for Bertie, he never was so great a hero again in his life as that day at school. A boy who had a hundred dollars to spend just as he liked was quite out of the common order of boys. All the afternoon he was out saying good-bys, and was tired enough to go to bed early.

Friday the carriage came, with no one but the colored driver. Bertie cried over his good-bys, more from sympathy than deep feeling. The boy's adventurous spirit had been stirred, and he was eager for fresh fields. Were men always to be held with a light hand? Did women walk alone down heart-break hill?

It was curious how soon everything settled back into its



usual routine, in spite of all the changes, and the knowledge that no one tie or circumstance could be as it was a brief month ago. No outward whirlwind had swept through their midst, yet they seemed groping for fragments of the wreck, for the treasure that had gone down.

All but Daisy. She was sensibly, completely happy. She served as a kind of equipoise to the mental strain and drain of the others; she brought them back from that far world of intense questioning and intricate thought to the common incidents of life. Each day she surprised her mother by some new bit of worldly wisdom, and Celia by predictions of the future that she would hardly have dared to entertain.

"You see, Célie," she said in her bird-like lightness of tone. "I can't help believing that it will be all made up some day, and that Bertie's going was the best thing that could happen. He is coming to the unmanageable time of a boy's life, and most boys need the dignity of a father. A mother, somehow, be she never so good, does not seem to carry weight. It is the inherent difference, I suppose, between the man and the woman. And then it *is* right that papa should educate him when he has done nothing at all for us. Still there is no use holding old grudges. Mamma is right in not appealing to him in any way, and I am sure her very nobleness will shame him in the end. But when the proffer does come, I for one am willing to meet him half-way—we ought all to be. If he had returned home the same as he went away, it would have been very different."

A peculiar flickering light, a kind of fine tremor ran over Celia's face. Like an awful, vivid picture she can see a raging drunken man strike his fair little daughter such a blow that she reels to the floor and carries the marks for days, and a wild terror-stricken voice cries in its utter woe—"O my God, if you have murdered her!" But Daisy has cast all that behind her. She keeps in light

marching order, and does not encumber herself with the unnecessary baggage of last week's service. It is a new week, and new appointments are needed. Is she so much more forgiving, Celia wonders? She can almost feel the blow herself; she can quite feel some that her mother has received.

To tell the truth, Daisy enjoyed the house better without Bertie. She wanted some of her mother's attention. There was spring trade to think about, styles, fashions, colors, broad ribbons and narrow ribbons, bonnet shapes, harmonies and contrasts. For the first time Eleanor shrank from it with weariness and disgust. Women's vanities seemed so puerile, so tiresome. Why did they never outgrow them! Why was the tint of a flower or the graceful droop of a feather a subject to be studied and discussed and compared, with as fervent an interest as if it was one of the great decisions of life, and the ruth or salvation of an immortal soul. Daisy's fresh girlish love was like a breath of spring to stale hot-house air.

The Galbraiths were waiting to see her. She must go to tea, and there were so many things to talk over. She was glad to depute everything she could to Miss Parker, who was still as brisk and cheery as if in the dawn of youth and hope.

They all went to the Galbraith tea. There was no other visitor beside Mr. Lasselle. Really, when you came to study them, Tracy and Daisy had the more aplomb. They were much in love, but not of the idiotic order. Miss Galbraith was nervous in spite of her year's engagement. The "congregation" loomed up a very bugbear.

"I am so glad you are not a clergyman," laughed Daisy in a little aside to her lover, "but do you suppose I would care a fig for the whims and fimsies of such people? I should do what was just and fair and honorable, and let others square their behavior to some higher standard than the color of my dress and an extra ribbon or two."

"But you have more spirit and dignity," said the lover admiringly. "Daisy, you are so much like your mother, only one feels half afraid of her."

"Do you never feel afraid of me?" and the fair head has taken its proudest pose.

He would like to shower hundreds of kisses on brow and cheek and rosy mouth, to say nothing of the lovely cleft chin, and she seeing it in his enraptured face, laughs just a very little, a laugh that speaks worlds.

The question the elders had to discuss was not the propriety of kissing before folks, nor whether a clergyman's wife should wear jewelry if it did not come out of her husband's salary; that was somehow sacred money, and not to be perverted to worldly adornment. Mr. Lasselle had settled upon July for a marriage month, as a friend would then be glad to come and take his duty. Why should not Daisy be a second bride? The marriage ceremony would be in church, the proper place of course, and then an elegant reception at Mr. Galbraith's.

Mrs. Marshall listened. It took Daisy quite out of old reminders, business associations, though the Galbraiths had not studied that aspect. To them it was pure parental pleasure, the delight of a good, homelike time. There would be a house ready for the young couple when they came back, — "nothing so very grand," — said Mr. Galbraith, "I do not believe in young people beginning at the very top of the ladder. Going up is much more agreeable than coming down."

In her heart she knew the bitterness of coming down.

It was such a cheery, wholesome, old-fashioned kind of visiting. The girls were a little afraid of Celia; she was a genius and consorted with great people, so they paid her a delicate reverence; but Daisy was their very own. She could look at their eyes and hair, and pick out the exact shades of color, she could tell whether high draping would make them look too bunchy, and just where a fold or a

loop or a cascade should be. They were so glad to have her. Then they had gone to school together and knew each other so well, and it ended by the mother consenting to every proposal of Mr. Galbraith's, though they were gently proffered as favors. Daisy Marshall was doing them the honor, for if they had money she had her bright beauty and grace, her incomparable air, her exquisite voice, and the subtle strength never easily put down, yet rarely aggressive. Daisy Marshall would make a good, honest fight on any question of social usage; Celia would pass those by to the higher ground. But does not the greater part of the world stand on the broad, middle plain?

"Oh, mamma," Celia said that night, with a breathless, exhaustive tenderness in her voice, as she clasped her arms about her mother's neck, "it is so much better that I have decided to give up Mr. Sherrard. I am afraid I do not love him with my whole soul. And you will need me."

Is it a sacrifice? The mother has seen another vision, so rarely perfect, so high, clear, and exquisite that she trembled with the dazzling and but half comprehended sense. Shall she let Celia go on and make a grave mistake, such as she committed in her youth? Would it be selfish to take this serenely offered tenderness, and let the other seek elsewhere? She seems to hold Celia's soul in her hand, balancing it, and because hers cries out for its tender sympathy, she is afraid of some selfish motive.

"We will see, dear. With some women love is a plant of slow growth. I cannot have you mar your life for my sake."

It seemed hardly possible that a month had passed since the day Celia Marshall came home with her engagement ring on her finger. Some necessary work she had sent for, and one brief, delicate little note of excuse had gone to her lover to be answered by a curiously speculative, yet

tender missive. Indeed, a few words dropped by Mr. Howarth had greatly disturbed the lover.

"I know Miss Marshall so well," said the elder gentleman, "that I can safely predict no positive acceptance of any suit until her lover is made aware of some family complications. Her father went away years ago, and has now returned with a fortune. There was much in his life that must ever be a source of regret, so you had best hear it from her. I might blame unduly."

Just at this juncture his mother sent for him. Some western property was in danger, and she was anxious to be rid of it, but not on the lawyer's terms, which would nearly swallow the whole. He was glad to go. He wanted a little time to think. Had he been over hasty?

So another dainty missive explained his absence from the city. If Celia had said "Come to me," he would have gone instantly. Later in life he looked back upon this idle composure as if the gods had indeed lulled him to sleep with some fatal draught.

He had been so much in the greater world that the narrow, sordid views of these women irked him intolerably. The loss of a few thousands out of their store set them wild. What need they care? it would come to him by and by, and if he did not mind, why should they?

He had a dream of a new generation in this grand old place. Sons and daughters, with the pure white souls of their mother, and a fine, subtile ingrained strength; with no selfish, sordid aims; living out the greater truths, that in some occult way were slowly dawning upon him,—the vital, joyous, uplifting truths, higher than mere intellectual culture, yet a part of it, shaped to the fine, broad uses of humanity. He had seen such a man, such a woman. Oh, sad travesty of fate, why cannot these two souls transmit their saintly and knightly virtues to posterity?

It was a great relief to Celia Marshall to know that she

need not face this question immediately. She went to the city. Mrs. Linthorpe was urgent, and plans for future work were coming in that argued well for the prosperity and reputation of the artist,—a series of designs for a favorite poem, two or three studies of ornamental art, and some copies of past efforts, singularly beautiful. There would be work enough presently to bring about the realization of her dream. Daisy married, Bertie's future assured in the pride if not the affection of his father, and her mother belonging to her alone. Better than any love of lovers, she said proudly.

The first evening she related to Mr. and Mrs. Howarth her mother's trial and decision. They had heard of her father's return, and wondered what the outcome might be.

"I do not see that she could well have done differently," said Mr. Howarth. "There is no question but that the child would have been given to his father. When we come to that higher, finer life where motives and deeds count against mere money, we may find purer justice meted out. Tell her for me that she has our warmest sympathy." He could answer for his wife here.

"It is a cruel, selfish wrong!" Mrs. Howarth's eyes flamed with the deep sense of injustice that thrilled every pulse. "It makes me sick of the world, sick of the weary years of waiting, sick of the sermons and culture and efforts for human souls that we so prate about, of the great advancement we fancy we have made, when no one recognizes the difference between a life-long devotion and a momentary pleasure or whim that costs nothing. O my dear child, God help her to bear her burden, and we must not leave it all for Him to do. He gives us all a duty in this matter."

Celia clasped the strong, warm hands, and they inspired her anew with faith in the future.

Mrs. Howarth's sympathy did not stop here. While

she would have rigorously excluded anyone tainted by the breath of wrong or scandal, her clear eyes could see this woman's justification. Not a move in all these years that had been a bid for license, for any freedom beyond the merest duty. She had come and gone in the business world, commanding only the most respectful attention. Were not her virtues to outweigh her husband's vices? Could mere wealth so gloss over a wrong?

She went to her as a sister might. Her clear, high approval inspired Mrs. Marshall, lifted her out of that dreary depth where even courage must have failed after a while. She could have made a brave stand for her children's sake, but, that ended, the rest of the struggle appeared futile, useless.

So it came to pass, the main points at issue settled themselves before Mr. Sherrard's return. Mr. and Mrs. Howarth had discussed the future of the little group so endeared to them, and resolved that before long they would use every means to restore Mrs. Marshall to her true position. The urgent need of support for a family would be at an end. Mrs. Marshall and Celia could make a new home, such as the child needed for her future advancement and reputation. Indeed, there were many ways in which the mother could be of great assistance to the daughter.

"And it shows the fallacy of our beliefs in the high future for women's labor when the bravest among us push onward to the step above, to the things on which society has set its royal signet. I feel ashamed of myself," declared Mrs. Howarth; "and yet two or three cannot move the world."

"Since the world is not ready to be moved," said her husband with a grave smile. "When we come to pay true respect to the dignity of labor; when we set the honesty, the perseverance, the sobriety of the poor man upon its proper level, and esteem them above the 'luck,'

as it is called, that brings a fortune, no matter how dishonest were the means used, we shall have made a great stride; when we insist upon pure and simple integrity in all life's dealings, and not a wasteful show, a wicked extravagance; when we brand dishonesty for what it is, and cease to bow down to the outside appearance of wealth, we may raise some few, longing souls to that better estate. Eleanor Marshall has made a brave fight with untoward circumstances. A man of her heroic courage would find friends on every hand, who would say 'Come up higher,' but the few who approve her cannot give her the setting of fine gold in the world's estimation while she remains where she is, to the sorrow and shame of men and women be it said. It is the old, old question, 'Can any good come out of Nazareth?' Can any virtue or elegance or refinement or culture be in and of a woman forced to earn her bread in the humbler walks of life? I like your plan, but you must go slowly. She has a fine, sensitive, shrinking pride from anything like charity. It must be done through and by Celia."

"I am quite sure it can be brought about. Mrs. Linthorpe would be delighted with such a home as they could make. I have often wondered why two or three lovely women could not unite their incomes and have the one charming, delightful abode that none of them could obtain singly. It would give them a more stable position than rooms and boarding-houses, and lead to a truer type of womanly refinement; for, after all, a woman's true centre must be in a home, and yet all women cannot in the nature of events have husbands. Many of them, indeed, would be infinitely better off without."

A peculiar, amused light crossed Leonard Howarth's face as his eyes rested on his wife.

"I am not going to undervalue happy marriages nor rail against husbands, when I have seen so many wives without conscience, hungry for admiration from everyone



they meet, whose sole aim seems some kind of daring notoriety much better suited to the *demi-monde* ; and when we have educated *our* world up to the dignity of honest labor and honest rewards, we will seek to elevate marriage, give it a sanctity that our girls in a mad race for an establishment know nothing about. Ours shall be a new world. What saith the old adage about 'spinsters' children' being so well regulated?" and she laughed brightly.

He came and kissed her. Pure and loyal honor had this noble wife. The woman he had loved in the past was the more sacred to him for the proud purity of this one, the wife who held his vows. Never has he been in danger of forgetting the integrity of his manhood, but all this seems to have brought them nearer to each other, given both a clearer insight into the clean, honest souls they laid on the marriage altar. Perhaps indeed *her* child had touched the long-silent chord into a glorious harmony that must give forth a holy music evermore.

One evening Fairfax Sherrard stood in that very end of the long drawing-room where he slipped his ring so hastily on Celia's finger. Two months ago. What has happened in this time to change her, for a vague subtle alteration has been worked by some unknown hand. The shy, hesitating innocent girl's soul has passed over the bridge to the broader higher confines of womanhood. Sweet and daintily clean, lily-pure it must always be.

The ring lies there on the corner of the table. The *portières* are drawn, with their heavy silken folds, and send rich suggestive shadows to meet and tone down the brightness of the fire. The ray of the diamond is a weird elusive soul, like a living power to judge between them.

"I think I have heard all I need know," Fairfax Sherrard says gravely. Somehow he cannot bear to hear those sweet, rose-hued lips go over that story. He wants her, there is no open disgrace, that is enough.

"*You must hear me.*" She stands there enfranchised, as it were, in her definite resolve. "I have come to understand that there are worlds and worlds. I seem to know so much more than I did a little while ago, when I listened and was fascinated into such a lovely, entrancing belief."

"Believe it now, that I love you. Let the rest go."

She folds her hands behind her, as if to put possible temptation out of his way.

"Your world is so different. There are stains, it seems, that show in it long after the sin has passed. I have to bear the sins of others."

"Oh, my darling, what matters? You are lily-pure, my sweet white rose."

"I do not believe the sin of another can stain the soul which steadfastly and purely strives against it. Listen—let me finish what I have to say."

Briefly she goes over it. He can guess more from the pauses, from the fact quietly stated with no comment, than from any vivid description. He knows now it was her mother who went away and why she did it, that they have ranged themselves in the procession of labor, taken their places in the working world with the sign manual up above them. It is an ugly fact, and some one may remember it to his wife's future discredit. He has seen stabs given by the iron hand of society, couched in its softest velvet glove. The mother of a new Sherrard race that he has resolved to rear, free from the narrowing faults of that intense pride of ancestry, and yet so proud to look in her fair face free from stain. He winces a little, and the fine gentleman in him shrinks, the loyal, braver man loves her, wants her, needs her.

"And I think," she says clearly, "that I must always go on with my work. Have women with some other aim any right to marry? Then I must cling to my mother in her broken life," and now for the first time the voice fal-

ters, the steady curves of the lips break up, the white brow is stained with the faintest flush.

Fairfax Sherrard recognizes, as souls sometimes do in a transcendental sort of world, that this is the one woman for him. He would fain have her as peerless in all her antecedents as her noble soul, but he has known peerless antecedents that have brought forth souls who covered themselves with shame as with a garment, and rioted in it. He knows, too, that the world at large will forgive her father all his vicious faults before it will forgive her mother one industrial virtue that has demeaned the white hand of a lady. But he loves her. Every word she utters forges some new link in the chain. He almost wishes it were not so, or if he were in the habit of being less honest with himself; but the truth is there. With her he may reach up to that prince of men, that knightly soul, Leonard Howarth. Without her he will be as Samson when his locks were shorn. He can endure it no longer, but rises, approaches her, though she extends no alluring hand.

"I love you. I think I have read of a bird somewhere who has no other song but that. Shall I shrive you from all sins others have laid upon you by that very love? Since your soul is stainless, nothing else can destroy my faith."

"You do — ~~not~~ understand —" a perturbed expression crosses the brow so serene in its high faith of a moment ago. "Everything seems to widen the space between us. Your world is not my world — my duties, my pleasures."

"Will you deliberately shut me out of your world? Is it so narrow that even love cannot enter?"

Oh, the tenderness of voice and look. It makes her feel a sinner above all women even in her pure sweetness. When he would give all — can she give nothing, nay, even withhold what she first promised?

"Mamma," she says tremulously, "I can never leave her."

"And why need you leave her?" In his heart of hearts he feels like several of the others, that the trouble between husband and wife will be made up with some kind of reconciliation. "Why can she not share our home? Come, Celia, I am in a princely generous mood. Ask any thing, all things. Try my love to the uttermost."

It is the supreme moment of Fairfax Sherrard's life. We do not always stand on the heights, indeed some souls never reach them.

She has nothing to ask. A curious chill goes over her, as if some sudden draught swept through the apartment. Her vivid, throbbing strength seems to collapse. What is the meaning of it all? Why is she not exultant?

After all he is a man and fond of a man's victory. He will win her again in spite of herself. He passes his arm around her and draws forth her reluctant hand.

"My darling, you must let me put the ring on again, not with the old hastiness, but with a new, strong assurance that we two are destined to work out a life problem together. I think you hardly know your own soul. Do you remember the night you stood in marble for Leigh Esdaile? Well, for a moment I hated him bitterly, sinfully, I am afraid, and then I knew I loved you. Let me awaken the soul of love as the soul of life came to you that night. Slowly, sweetly, a little link here, a little bond there, until you tell me of your own accord that I have won it all. You shall paint as you like, only there need be no duty work, and your mother shall be the fond and treasured guest, the mother of both, Celia!"

There is something commanding in his voice that sways her, something so entreating, so utterly soul-absorbing that she seems to go out of her own control. Has he not been noble, generous? What can she ask that he has not proffered?

He places the ring again on her finger and kisses the

hand that holds it, he kisses the sweet, tremulous lips that have no heat of passion in them ; and with a strange awesome humility he remembers one sad blot on his old life that will always keep her just that distance from him, above him. She, not knowing that, mistakes it and is pierced to the heart, all her pride and doubts are swept away.

" Oh," she cries with that long, quivering breathlessness of intensity, " you love me too much ! How can I ever make a worthy return ? Why, even life would be too short ! "

" My darling," in a deep, happy tone, " I shall ask back every golden grain that you fail to give, I shall be a very miser gloating over his treasure. "

He draws her down there by the fire. There are no cold and ghostly blasts now. They talk awhile, then fall into blessed silence, then rouse themselves again. It is not all silly endearment. Somehow they stray back to the old question, the responsibility of life, the burdens laid upon the innocent. She knows that intemperance is one of the things he so utterly abhors, that in her generous soul she is anxious to rehabilitate her poor father. In spite of all his wealth he seems cold and lonely to her warm and happy human love. She pleads for those who have sinned and gained some signal victory over themselves. Sweet soul, she does not know she is pleading for him as well.

" Yes," he says, " we shall always give our strong and fond admiration to Sir Launcelot, the bravest of knightly souls, but Sir Galahad stands without a peer. There are no Sir Galahads in these degenerate days, and we must e'en make the best of our Launcelots. "

Her eyes settle on the fire musingly. A soft light comes and goes, a rich inward light that brings certainty.

" What are you thinking of. Have you found one ? Ah, my darling, they are all weak, mortal men. "

She turns her blossom face toward him with a bright, confident look, and her eyes are sinless in their absolute purity.

"I think there is one," in her sweet, serious tone. "It always seemed to me the old romance had come back in Percival Chantrey."

Ah, *he* is not her Sir Galahad! Only a moment, then he is reconciled. Better that she should place him on a lower round and not be disappointed. And is not Chantrey a rather hard, intellectual idealist with an impossible standard; and not the sweet, generous soul of the old-time searcher after the mysteries?

"I thought you would say Mr. Howarth;" he makes answer.

"Ah, yes, we both agree about him," and she smiles.

Some guests are going away from the library. Sherrard has stayed the full limit of a gentlemanly lover's time, though it seems to-night as if he could linger forever. But he bids her such a good-by that it almost seems love's eternal farewell.

Celia goes straight up to Mrs. Howarth, who in a pale rose dressing-gown is nursing away a headache. The hand with its diamond circlet is laid on that of the elder lady.

"He was so generous, so noble — ah, you can hardly think! He did not want to listen, but I would make him hear all — not the worst," and she blushes, "but enough, so that he can never feel himself deceived. And — he would not give me up," — hastily. "It is to be quite a long engagement. I have my year's work ahead of me, you know. We shall come to understand each other in that time, but oh, how can one give one's self in a few brief months," and she thinks of Daisy.

Mrs. Howarth gives her an exultant kiss. The way is fair for her sweet little *protégée*. Once in a long while the romance reads rightly, and now this will have no blurred pages. She is almost a mother herself, and sees her darling in snowy wedding-dress.

## CHAPTER XXI.

"Oh fools ! to think the Lord  
Would hear their prayers abroad  
Who made no prayers at home." — SOUTHEY.

BERTIE MARSHALL wrote his mother some boyish letters, which she answered something as if he had been a little lad at school, and there was danger of making him homesick. Not that she even soothed her aching heart with the belief that he longed for her ardently. He was wildly happy. He had a pony, he and papa and Aunt Kate went out on long rides, there were sails, there was every luxury to eat, no small item to a healthy, unsentimental boy. They were not coming straight home, but would stop in all the cities and see all the wonders. He loved papa very much, but then he loved her, too.

She was glad to thrust the evil day as far off as possible. It was an early spring, and trade was brisk ; it always was with her. The work room was full of chatty girls who gossiped about this one and that one, not in any ill-natured way. Celia's lover paid his visit of respect, and secretly admitted that Mrs. Marshall might be transplanted to any station. If there never had been any need of this step!

Celia's engagement was kept a complete secret for the present. She addressed herself industriously to her work. Her lover had various amusements and little jaunts with friends. Celia was to have a month of recreation with the Howarths at Newport, while Mrs. Van Cleve had finally induced Mrs. Marshall to take a little summering with her in a lovely old Massachusetts town.

Now Daisy's coming marriage occupied all the time that could be spared from business. It soothed her mother's

sad heart to watch the buoyant girl, a little, after all, like her olden self; but with an oddly consequential way as if trying on matronly airs. There was much in it that was inspiring, as there is ever in youthful joyousness. And Daisy had the two trousseaux on her pretty shoulders. Her sister-in-law elect said a dozen times a day—"Oh Daisy, you are so good! Whatever should I have done without you!"

Mrs. Marshall found that her own importance increased greatly. Several friends of her youth drifted back to her with a pleasant cordiality. Aunt Wilder nodded to her one day from the carriage, but Eleanor was more cruelly hurt by the tardy recognition than all the long years of silence.

The wedding-day was set for the very last of June, which fell on Thursday. It was to be at seven in the evening, with a reception for the next two hours, graced by both brides, who were then to start on a wedding journey.

Certainly Daisy Marshall might well feel elated with the number and value of her wedding gifts, three times more numerous than her wildest dreams. Her father and Bertie had taken in all the pleasures on their upward route, and were now sojourning at Sulphur Springs, which proved very beneficial. Mrs. Marshall had mentioned Daisy's marriage, and Bertie had asked for the date. It had been a most embarrassing problem to her how much duty she owed in this case.

Daisy herself laid it before Mr. Galbraith, having great faith in his clear judgment. Would it be improper for her to write? She did not want it to look as though she was asking anything from him, and yet it seemed hard not to have his good wishes.

"Write by all means," replied her second father, kissing her fondly. "If you write a letter as you do all other things, you cannot miss the way to his heart."



So Daisy wrote, just as she did other things, in her bright, winsome way, touching, but not sentimental, not long enough to bore him, and avoiding blunders with all of Celia's delicacy. Yet the shrewd girl thought, "If he could give Bertie a hundred dollars to spend for nonsense, he might send me that much ;" but she kept her counsel discreetly until she knew the result, which overwhelmed her with surprise.

Mr. Marshall wrote a more than kindly letter to his child, and expressed a longing to see her, a certainty that he would allow himself the gratification now that he knew she had not ceased to care for him. He sent her good wishes and begged her to accept a little gift with his love. By taking the enclosed paper to Mr. Aldenshaw, she would receive the sum, invested in government bonds. The order was for ten thousand dollars.

"Oh, it can't be true," Daisy cried, dismayed by her sudden wealth.

Mrs. Marshall was surprised and at first puzzled. Then she remembered how generous Thomas Marshall had always been with money, how he loved lavish giving, and this was not much in his present prosperity.

"You are not offended, mamma?" Daisy asked in a little tremor of anxiety.

"My darling, no. Whom should he love if not his own children? If it should ever come in your way, Daisy, to meet him, remember nothing of the past against him."

She could hardly believe her good fortune until it had been certified by Mr. Aldenshaw.

"There are positively no restrictions upon it, although you are so much under age. It seems to me it would be a good thing to let it stand and use only the interest at present."

Daisy signified so cheerful a willingness to be guided by this advice that Mr. Aldenshaw's respect for her good sense was at once established.

Celia rejoiced unfeignedly. While she could never have summoned the courage to write, she was glad that Daisy had taken the step.

The marriage was an extremely beautiful sight, everybody admitted. The church was crowded as a matter of course. That Daisy Marshall, tall and slender, in her rapid, rippling grace, her vivid tints, her perfect health and graceful carriage, should outshine the plainer bride, with her sensible, ordinary face, was not altogether unexpected. Even her mother's heart warmed with pride. Mr. and Mrs. Van Cleve had met the party at the church, and Mr. Chantrey had escorted Celia. The two Galbraith girls were bridesmaids, happy in their blushing honors, and Mr. Galbraith gave away both brides.

The words dropped on the mother's heart like a knell of fate. Oh, what was before these young souls! For her sky had been as unclouded, her prospects as bright, her faith as serene; and to-night a wide gulf between, but not death.

The Galbraith house was light, fragrance, music, and rejoicing. Nothing overdone, no vulgar display, but the glad outcome of a father's love to children who had been his joy and comfort; and that Daisy Marshall should be an heiress, even in a moderate way, added to his delight, though it could add nothing to his regard for her.

Then the parting moment came. Mrs. Marshall kissed her daughter with passionate tenderness. Celia was more to her, yet Daisy reminded her of her own bright self, and the lover of her youth. Both parents met and blended in the child.

"It was a lovely wedding," said Celia, as the two returned to their simple home. "It was so glad and happy, and I think life ought to begin that way. Daisy has belonged to the Galbraiths so exclusively since her engagement that we shall not miss her as much as if it had been otherwise."

She would not leave her mother alone an instant, neither would she allow any misgiving to suggest itself. The tender care went to the mother's heart, for to-night she felt weak and lonely. The long future stared her in the face, — her work was so nearly done.

Mr. Sherrard had proposed to wait upon his betrothed, but she shrank from such a pronounced attention.

"You are not flattering to a man's vanity," he said laughingly. "Any other girl would exhibit her willing captive in triumph, as a part of her engagement spoil."

"I am not any other girl," she answered seriously. "It would remind mamma of another loss, of the time when she may be alone, for a while at least. And — I could not bear to be questioned."

"I yield gracefully, since you had one thought of yourself in the matter."

"You know I am to have this year for mamma. There will be a long life afterwards."

Yet she sighed a little. It was a divided duty.

It fretted Fairfax Sherrard sometimes, and yet he knew her decision was best for both. He hoped sincerely that, before any announcement, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall would have made up their difficulties. It would render the way smoother for him, and he was not fond of rough paths. He had never quite understood why some of the sweetest roses should abound in thorns.

Mrs. Marshall's surprises were not all at an end. Two days after the marriage, Mrs. Wilder rang the hall door-bell, and was ushered up stairs into the parlor. Eleanor went thither with a curious rush of mingled emotion.

"My dear Eleanor," and Mrs. Wilder rose with outstretched hands; "I have come to make up this wretched difference. It has troubled me a long while," — she blessed her kindly stars that she had taken none of the untoward steps she had contemplated from time to time, — "and as I knew you would never come to me —"

"No, I should never have come to you," Mrs. Marshall replied with sad, yet graceful dignity.

"Of course we did not think alike on some points, but Eleanor, I had loved you as my own child. I should have said the same to one of *my* daughters under similar circumstances. It was a great trial to us all, and I regretted bitterly that you should have had so little regard for old Mrs. Marshall; it hurt her cruelly. I think they have never felt the same toward us."

"It is fruitless going over the old ground. Honestly I have had more comfort and prosperity, more friends, more enjoyments; I have reared my children in credit and honor. Indirectly I may have saved Mr. Marshall from a drunkard's grave, whither I felt he was surely hastening. I did outrage some of the traditions concerning woman, that she must suffer in silence, that she must not step out of her husband's shadow, that her work must be of the hidden, unobtrusive kind. I have made and sold bonnets, but it has given me the kind of home that I could not have had with a man lost to every sense of ambition and honor."

"That is all past." She waved her faultlessly gloved hand in a majestic manner. "Daisy has married extremely well for a girl in such a position, and I must say her father has been generous to her. I do hope, Eleanor — I really do not see the necessity for your continuing business. Celia, if report speaks truly, is doing extremely well, and — I should be glad to take you back into your old home. Your uncle is in very poor health, and you could assist me in nursing him if you really wanted to do a good work. Such a step would go far towards softening animosities, and Mr. Marshall would feel that you had gone out of your sphere from necessity, not from choice. And surely you must see that in every point of view it would be better to become reconciled to your husband. For the sake of your children —"

A fine kind of contempt had settled in Eleanor Marshall's face as she listened to this reasoning.

"Mr. Marshall must make the first advance," she began, but Mrs. Wilder interrupted her impatiently.

"Advance! Do you call his taking Bertie nothing? Was there no meaning in his generous gift to Daisy? Eleanor, you fail to read between the lines what is patent to everybody."

A bitter smile crossed the spirited face, and she held her head proudly.

"Is a man's simple duty to his children to be accounted so great a virtue? For at least ten years I have fed and clothed Bertie and Daisy. Can the next ten years of his devotion more than balance that? Is there no commendation for my years of labor, while a fortunate turn in the wheel of fate raises him in every one's esteem much more than my honest industry! I shall not cross any fatherly instinct in his soul, though it is hard for me to sit silent and see the praise go over to him. But when he wishes for a husband's place, he must come to me. I shall not go to him."

"But you left him. You went away!" Mrs. Wilder was beginning to lose her serene temper.

"We were turned out of our home, and he provided no other. When he asks me to share any home of his providing, it will be time to consider. I must thank you for your kind offer,"—she could not quite keep the scorn out of her voice,— "but under any circumstances I could not accept it."

"I see you keep your old spirit, Eleanor," returned Mrs. Wilder tartly. "Still, I am glad I came, and I hope I have convinced you that, however deeply we may have been wounded, we do not treasure up wrongs against you."

"I am not aware that I have wronged my family in anything that I have done!" she replied with conscious dig-

nity. "If every one can forgive those years of Thomas Marshall's drunken debauch, it ought not to be so hard to forgive my clean and honorable industry. But we look at the matter from opposite extremes; you from leisurely sympathy; I from hard suffering; you from the sentimental view that whatever God sends must be borne in silence; I from the firm belief that God gives every human soul the right to try for its own salvation and that of its nearest and dearest ones; not only from eternal death, but that despairing death in life that benumbs the senses, that fills the soul with bitter, deadening apathy, that robs one of courage, faith, hope, and makes existence itself a mockery."

Her fine eyes shone in their high lights, and her whole face was sublimed by the sense of enthusiastic endeavor that had upheld her through all these years.

"Well, I am sure I have tried to advise to the best of my knowledge. It is true I have never taken up these new ideas and systems, and may be a little out of date in my belief,"—with an emphasis that said, no matter what others held, her beliefs were indisputably right. "And we shall be glad to see you, — your uncle scarcely goes out, except for a drive."

"Thank you." The tone was so utterly cold that Mrs. Wilder felt strangely disconcerted. She rose with a demeanor that was meant for dignity, but was only a selfish severity.

"You have meant kindly," said Eleanor in the same distant tone, "but you cannot judge rightly of my life, nor my work. At present I am deeply engrossed, and hope to go away for a rest this summer. It has been a long march with few halting-places, but my strength has never failed, and my endurance will hold out to the end."

Any other person must have admired the brave, high soul that animated the face and gave exquisite courage to

the figure that longed to lean, but steadfastly refused the broken reed that would surely pierce it.

Mrs. Wilder went straight to Mrs. Mountjoy's. She had undertaken peace-making in the family, and she would rise superior to all rebuffs.

The house was in a confusion of packing. Mrs. Mountjoy had three daughters now in society, and she began to feel that maternal vigilance must seek a new channel. The girls had petitioned for a summer at Long Branch, and the privilege of being like other girls. Mrs. Mountjoy was not in a very serene temper, and the girls were decidedly cross. Daisy Marshall's good fortune had quite upset them.

"I have been reasoning with Eleanor," announced Mrs. Wilder. "I have felt for some time that a step ought to be taken in the right direction, and I have had courage for it at last. Family differences always bear a taint of vulgarity. There is no question in my mind but that Mr. Marshall will come back to her after these overtures, and, of course, they will take their olden place in society."

"Do you suppose people will forget that she has made their bonnets, that she has stood behind the counter like an ordinary tradeswoman and taken their orders?" asked Mrs. Mountjoy with a lofty scorn.

"No; that will be her punishment for her headstrong and unwomanly episode. But society will not refuse to appreciate Mr. Marshall's million or as many thousands as it may be. We shall be likely to meet them, and it is best to meet pleasantly."

"I wish such people were compelled to stay where they belong," was the spiteful answer.

"I wish some one would give me ten thousand dollars," sighed Alice. "You are right, grandmamma, everybody nearly *will* receive Daisy Galbraith. I can't see what there is so wonderful about her, but people are raving of her beauty and her voice and her manners. And if Tracy

Galbraith had not married her I do not believe she would go begging for a husband."

Alice was fond of saying things that tormented her mother. All her life she had fretted against the punctilious rule, and evaded it whenever she could, flung out at it in her moments of vexation.

"I believe most girls could get husbands if that was the chief aim of their lives."

"Is n't it the chief aim of ours?" asked the girl with a kind of impertinent irony. "We can never be authors or artists or musicians or doctors or lecturers, indeed nothing but old maids for all I see!"

"Alice, I am ashamed of you! Leave the room this instant," commanded her mother majestically.

"I am sure I don't know what to make of my girls," she exclaimed with a desperate pathos. "I have given them every advantage, I have been a most devoted mother, and I dare say Eleanor's daughters are more thankful for crusts and crumbs. Mr. Van Cleve was descanting eloquently the other evening, very bad taste I thought it, too, upon Celia's devotion to her mother. I suppose *she* never means to marry!"

Mrs. Wilder tried to soften and comfort. It occurred to her then that Mrs. Mountjoy found but a dreary satisfaction in her life work. She was nearly five years older than Eleanor, but she looked at least ten. Was there some higher satisfaction in a noble duty nobly done, a finer and larger awaiting for such a soul! The crust of her rigid self-complacency was pierced by unexpected queries.

Mrs. Marshall turned to her work, arranging Celia's pretty summer wardrobe, though she knew it would have many lovely additions through the generous affection of her second mother. Was it a light work to have gained the approval of such people as the Howarths and the Van Cleves, with their pure and perfect apprehension of spirit-



ual as well as moral fitness? Among them she did not need to make the old fight every day, to justify the past continually, but she could enter in and possess the sacred land of perfect sympathetic companionship.

She longed with the torn and bruised motherly love that had been so carelessly wounded, to keep this pure treasure with her. If they two could go to some quiet country place and, dropping their armor that protected from the burden and heat of the struggle, slip into a heavenly restfulness! 'Not now,' she said bravely to herself. It was better for Celia's future that she should make this social essay under such favoring circumstances. So she kissed her with the brave kisses of parting, not its weak and clinging ones, and saw her clasp that other hand, crowned with all the good the world could give. Was it strange if a sharp, blinding sense of injustice stung her? Could not she have enjoyed this? Could not she have played a winning and lovely Lady Bountiful?

Miss Parker proved herself invaluable. She would keep the house and the store, attend to everything — "and I know your ways so well," she said energetically, "that you will find everything just as you left it. They're lovely ways, too. They soften and beautify everything so."

Mrs. Marshall went with Mrs. Van Cleve to an enchanting nest among the Berkshire hills, a glorious old farmhouse with large, cool rooms, quiet, ease, comfort, with all worldliness shut out. And then she suddenly dropped down. The march had been so long and unbroken that overtaken mind and body suffered the inevitable collapse when the iron hand of compulsion was withdrawn.

She had nothing to do but lie on the sofa by the open window, watching the quivering light and gloom, the sunny glimpses, the twilight repose; listen to the song of birds, the wandering touches of busy life without, a life that was not driven or hurried, but unfolded as some lives may in God's own beautiful world. Beside her a watchful, unob-

trusive friend, tenderly sweet, but not weak, grown into that broader and more gracious womanhood when the culture of the soul is added to the culture of the intellect. She talked or was silent, she read bits of fugitive verse in which many an unknown soul has touched the subtle chord of humanity, or sometimes the stronger, more stirring appeals from fine minds who had traversed thorny paths to come out at last in God's calm, open sunshine.

The simplicity and integrity of the place were palpable, and penetrated to the inner life. The long delicious days, the cool, calm nights, the bits of talk, old-fashioned, quaint, trenchant with much biblical lore and abiding faith that comprehended the fine points of Christianity as truly as the lore of the scholar. Dreamily she listened, as if she had gone out of the old life altogether, until some wrench of sharp self-analysis brought her back.

"If I could only know that I had done the best there was to do," she said to her friend. "I go over the ground and wonder if I could have been more patient. It appeared then that patience only pandered to self-indulgence, the more I gave up, the more was wrested from me. Silence only aided oppression and cruelty and brutal language. Sometimes it seems as if I must have imagined these horrible things, that a man could never so treat the wife he had sacredly promised to love and cherish. Who shall decide a wife's duty?" and she sighed wearily.

"The wife's duty and the mother's duty seemed to conflict. Can you not rest secure in the consciousness that one at least has been faithfully performed? Even one of life's great victories is worth striving for."

"If I had not hated that wretched existence so intensely! I did. I loathed him so at times that it seemed to me I must strike him! Ah, do not look at me with your startled eyes — I understand just how a woman feels when she beats a stupid, maudlin drunken husband; when he uses foul language to her that no woman ought to hear,

and she strikes in indignant passion! I hungered and thirsted after refinement, wholesomeness, pure air, leisure, books to read, and friends to converse with. I was always shuddering on the brink of the pit. Had I a right to snatch myself out of it and reach up to my own wants?"

"O Eleanor, can you question now? Suppose you had stayed there — no it would have been worse and worse," — with impassioned vehemence. "Think of Celia dragged down to some common level of poverty, looking at you with great dumb eyes that had lost their true sight, and Daisy a flippant factory or shop girl, laughing and jeering with her mates. There are nice girls, heaven knows, in these ranks, but they generally come from the clean, orderly homes. And Bertie —"

"Yes, I have gone over it so often. I have seen others, since," — shuddering. "But why could not God have allowed me to save him?"

"Ah, my dear, are not God's purposes the only true unknowable? If we could see, could understand, what need of faith, — the faith that will not allow us to stray very far from him?"

There was a long silence. "I am like the Jews," she said after a while, and there was a curious humility in her tone. "I asked for one particular sign. If I had saved him I should have had no more doubt. But I feel confident that no influence of mine snatched him from his miserable life."

"Oh, you do not know. For years sometimes a seed has lain dormant; and a word or sentence has borne fruit long after it was uttered."

"I cannot tell you what gives me the certainty. Yes, I can, too," — thoughtfully, while a rising color mantled her pale face. "If it had been any word or look of mine, he would have come to me, he could not have stayed away. And oh, it is so hard to know that all one's prayers and tears and long-suffering were of no avail."

She covered her face with her hands and sobbed softly.

"You still love him so!" said her friend.

"No, I must be honest. It is not that impassioned, unreasoning love that so inspires some women. I have outgrown him, if you can understand. I should love him now as a mother loves a wayward child on whom she knows she can never lean, but to-day Celia would be more of a true companion for me. Perhaps it is because I allowed the love to wear out that God has punished me by not answering my prayer."

"Then, Eleanor, can you not wait until the mysteries are all solved, till we see Him face to face and read in His clear light our mistakes, our labors that we considered fruitless, our rewards? After all, it is but such a little while. And if we suffer for the sins of others, what is this but the simplest form of that mysterious likeness? Can we not watch with Him in this suffering, this being misunderstood, being betrayed, even?"

"Yes," she said slowly a few minutes afterward. "I have gone all astray. There is still the watching with Him—to my life's end, perhaps. Sweet friend, pray that I may have strength, and not deny Him. That is the nobler test of one's life."

Was it this resolve that brought her peace? For she felt she had done the best with her hard circumstances, and now, if the result was not as she wished, she would leave it in His hands until the great day of explanations. She rose then and put off her sackcloth of soul. The old elasticity came back to her tread, the proud, tender light to her eye, the soft rose tint to her cheek. Barely at middle life, she could not afford to let her energy, her ambition, her varied gifts fall into disuse. What if part of her life work was done, that part pertaining closely to herself,—could she not open her soul and admit the broader outlook, the wider duties?

Letters came from all the children. Daisy was happy,

brimming over with delight. They had gone now to Mr. Galbraith's country house, an old farm some seven miles from the city. Her new house had been selected, one of a pretty row in Trevor Place, quite a stylish neighborhood. There was to be fresh painting and papering, and by the time mamma returned there would be the furnishing. Bertie was full of eager, boyish delight. Aunt Kate had gone to Long Branch, and presently the rest were to rejoin her and journey on to Saratoga. One sentence made her smile,—"Papa spends money like a prince. He must be awfully rich."

Celia's letters were long and minute, delicate studies. Mrs. Howarth had not forced her upon society. Her young friend the artist, Miss Celia Marshall, was staying with her, it was announced. She rode in the elegant Howarth carriage, she was present at the delightful receptions, she went out for calls, for rambles with chosen parties, for some yachting excursions. Somebody of note pronounced her "one of our most promising young artists." There was no æsthetic silliness about her. She never posed as a girl with a career. A simple, fresh, charming girl, with the air of quaintness that would always cling to her, and a purity so direct and honest that one felt here was no mad, eager follower of fashion and excitement, no husband-hunting girl, no aiming at that piquant fastness that leads so often to positive viciousness. She was pretty, but not of the beauty that provokes envy or detraction, and her choice breeding allowed her to pass unquestioned; indeed, won her that curious respect from elderly people, because she seemed to bring a whiff of the old-time fragrance, so much purer than the modern Jockey Club.

Fairfax Sherrard saw a great deal of her. For reasons of his own, he acquiesced in Mrs. Howarth's request that there should be no pronounced attentions. To have it known that she had captured this favorite of society

would be to open the gates to much ill-natured comment, and obscure her virtues before her position was firmly established. She had no coquettish ways to annoy him; indeed, it was her perfect truth that oftener roused a feeling he could not quite understand himself, and he did not always enjoy this direct and searching intensity into thought and motives. Mrs. Howarth was kindly disposed; she gave the lovers many a casual hour to themselves, was indeed a most generous *duenna*, for she trusted Celia as she would have trusted her own soul.

The summer holiday came to an end. Mrs. Marshall returned with renewed courage and strength, younger and handsomer than ever, Miss Parker declared. Daisy was overjoyed to greet her. The mother smiled over the indescribable change that had come to her, a kind of assured beauty instead of girlish prettiness. There was no business as yet, so mamma must help her choose carpets and furniture and bedding, and see how every article looked fitted into its new place.

"And mamma, I don't see why you cannot sell out the store now and come and live with me. There is no real need for you to do business. Celia is so fortunate, I am off your hands, and papa will educate Bertie. We could have such lovely times, and it would help to pay you back for all your goodness to me."

The mother kissed her tenderly. "Celia, too, has a plan," she returned. "Mrs. Linthorpe would like me to take her house, and Celia and I could be always together."

"Well, that would be delightful too. Only I *should* like you part of the time. Tracy and I have talked it over."

Daisy had a little plot confided to her husband. She had kept up an infrequent correspondence with her father, hoping she should see him when he returned to the city, and he had promised to visit her new home. Some way, she was quite sure she could make peace.

Oh, the dreary emptiness of the house without the children! She kept Miss Parker, indeed made her a generous offer to remain permanently.

"I suppose this is the reason women are so rarely successes in business in the long run," she said. "Men take it up for a life work, for reputation and money-making, while with women, when the necessity is over, they gladly fly back to the sanctuary of home, to the more congenial employments."

"If you ever think of giving up here, let me have the first chance," said Miss Parker with emphasis.

## CHAPTER XXII.

"My thread is small, my thread is fine,  
But he must be  
A stronger than thee  
Who can break this thread of mine."—SOUTHEY.

It is a dreary October day, with a drizzling, penetrating rain and a chilly east wind. There have been glories of sun and foliage, there will be again, but just now it is dispiriting. The sodden leaves no longer crunch under one's tread with that peculiar autumn crispness; even the long stretch of seashore wears a moist and treacherous aspect. Sherrard House is undeniably gloomy with its dripping trees, and shadowy ghost-like walks, its closed shutters, and general aspect of rigid, uncompromising exclusiveness.

"It must all be changed before *she* comes here," Fairfax Sherrard says to himself as he pauses to stamp the sticky leaves off his boot soles. "There will be a new queen, a new reign."

He has never broached the subject of his marriage. He is not an impatient lover, he knows it is the part of wisdom to wait, and falls in with Celia's plans, making just enough demur to appear lover-like. If he were his own master, which he is not, he would marry her to-morrow and take her to Europe, where they would have years of most delightful sauntering. He should not trouble himself about the poverty of the poor, nor the sufferings of the down-trodden, nor the spread of republicanism, nor the duration of monarchies or kingdoms. It would be the loveliest of haunts, the most glorious of views, pictures, statuary, gardens, music, old palaces, picturesque



people, and just enough society sandwiched between to add piquancy and keep the gay world in remembrance. Meanwhile Sherrard House should be made fit for a prince and princess.

He goes over it all in that brief walk, and reaches a side entrance, nearly as frowning and pretentious as the one in front. Bolts and bars and chains rattle, and he is admitted.

"Your room is in order, Mr. Fairfax," says the waiter with a bow. Any friendly greeting from an old servant is not admissible within the rigid walls of the mansion.

His room is cheerful with a fire and some modern additions he has brought in. He throws off his light ulster, goes to the wardrobe and lays out some fresh clothes, takes a bath, then pauses in his dressing. Since his aunt lies dead in the house, a white vest and a dress coat would be too pronounced—at least the white vest. The coat is a subject of much pondering, but at length he dons it. Then he rings the bell.

"Did you tell my mother I had come, Martin?" he asks.

"Yes, sir," with a bow.

"Tell her I am ready."

The answer is repeated. He laughs to himself at the utter absurdity of all this ceremony.

After a while he is summoned to his mother's presence. She is almost shrouded in crape and bombazine, and her face looks smaller, whiter, more wrinkled than ever. Indeed, if she shut her eyes you might think her dead. But her eyes, though not large and now quite sunken, are a sharp, piercing, distrustful black. They look as if they could scorch you.

He bows over her hand and kisses it, and inquires after her health and that of Aunt Fairfax. She is very much prostrated by the stroke, indeed she has been so poorly that it was a question which would go first. Then the

dinner bell rings, and Fairfax escorts his mother through the hall, dimly lighted, to the dining-room, that looks sombre, ghostly with these half-lights. She leans heavily on his arm and walks with uncertain step. She was thirty-five when she was married, and is now nearly seventy, but he remembers he has seen very bright, strong old ladies of seventy.

The dinner is tedious—meals always are tedious here, encumbered with so much ceremony, but the dessert and wine and fruit are through at last, and they return to the ordinary sitting-room. There she tells him the particulars of Aunt Livingstone's death. A trifling disease, mostly the debility of old age, and a slight stroke at the last, a decorous, seemly death, as becomes a Fairfax.

Presently she nods in her high-backed chair. Fairfax brings a book from the library, but, instead of reading, wonders how any human beings can lead such a mummified existence, how they breathe such stifling breaths, what order of minds must be theirs to exist in such vacuity. All summer Sherrard House has been closed to visitors, even he has been living largely at hotels and trespassing on Mrs. Howarth's hospitality. He could not endure such awful stagnation.

At nine o'clock Mrs. Sherrard rouses, gives her hand to her son to kiss, and, leaning on the arm of her abigail, retires. He rushes off to his own room. Elizabeth Livingstone lies in state in the great drawing-room, on a purple velvet pall, with waxen tapers about her, though they are not Romanists, and four watchers sit at a respectful distance. No Fairfax is ever buried in an unseemly hurry.

There is another day of rain and this gloomy ceremonious life. He walks up and down the billiard-room for exercise; to go out would be a positive crime. The third day it clears a little, and the service is read, the procession wends its way to the family vault, and the first

and oldest of the Fairfax sisters is left to her long, dreamless sleep.

When they return home, the lawyer comes in to read the will. For generations it has been done just this way. Aunt Emily came down to the funeral services, and is present now. The will is of a recent date, made about a month ago. Not a word of the legal verbiage is omitted. She is of sound mind, and commits her soul to God and her body to the dust. Then some keepsakes, old family heirlooms, of which there are duplicates, to some cousins. A few bequests to servants, not at all extravagant — "To my well beloved nephew Fairfax Sherrard the sum of one thousand dollars, to my dear sister Margaret Fairfax Sherrard —" all and everything, the share in the Sherrard House, bank stock, government bonds, diamonds, pearl necklace, etc.

A creepy chill goes down the young man's back, and he remembers the legend of someone stepping on the place where your grave is to be, as if it were just possible that he should not lie at rest in the old family vault. His mother's face is inscrutable. The lawyer makes a respectful suggestion about offering the will for probate, and she acquiesces. He picks up some papers and bows himself out.

"I am very weary," says Mrs. Sherrard, and indeed, she looks it. "Fairfax, if you will excuse my not coming to dinner — I will go to my room and retire."

Fairfax bows.

Aunt Emily rises and bids him adieu. His mother turns as if she had half forgotten something.

"My son," she says with her formal dignity, "I desire a little private conversation with you to-morrow just after breakfast."

Fairfax hurries on his outside coat, for the evening is chilly and the sky full of scurrying wind clouds, and goes out for a tramp, a hard swinging walk. Something

surely has happened. He had always supposed he would be his aunt's heir, all three of the women had been generous to him, but this is such an unlooked for phase. No one has found any fault with him, neither has he been unduly extravagant. What can it mean? And that paltry thousand dollars!

However, the morning does not delay. It comes in crisp and sunny, to soften down presently to the glow and richness of Indian summer. There is breakfast, and the two go to the dark old library. Mrs. Sherrard seats herself in front of the table.

"Fairfax," she says suddenly, "have you ever thought of marrying!"

He is crimson to the roots of his hair, and his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth. Then he gathers up courage, and with an unnatural little laugh replies,—

"I suppose I shall some time—most men do. Sherrard House is too fine a place to go out of the family."

"That does not answer my question." Her voice is so measured, so coldly precise, and not a breath goes over her face by which he can guess at any thought.

"Well," he says gravely, "suppose I have?"

"I was not supposing."

He draws a long, long breath. He has meant never to bring Celia into any wordy controversy. When he came in possession of sufficient fortune to enable him to marry, he had planned to make one bold stroke, to marry and let her forgive afterward, as he felt sure she would. Now the issue must be precipitated. For an instant he is tempted to utter a square, uncompromising falsehood, then Celia's pure eyes look him through.

"I have met a lady I like very much. I have not debated the subject of marriage very closely," and he tries to look indifferent.

"Will you mention her name?" and the old lady's tone is ominously smooth.

"Not at present. I should not discuss her with any person until it was — was a settled thing," — stumbling a little.

"Then I will mention it, having no delicate scruples. It is Celia Marshall. She is some sort of painter or designer. Her mother keeps a millinery store in the town of Westwater."

This is uttered in a tone of cold, calm contempt, as if she were repeating some distasteful lesson. Her keen eyes are fixed mercilessly upon her son.

He rises to the occasion. It is to be a bitter struggle between them, and he will fight for Celia. But oh, if she were the daughter of an utterly unknown person.

"Her mother is well born, connected with some of the best families in Westwater. In her early life she had every luxury, but poverty overtook her and she had three children to care for."

He will say nothing at present about Mr. Marshall. It would only add to the complication.

"Allow me to correct you," says his mother with insufferable superciliousness. "No *lady* could have gone in millinery or any other business. She might starve, but she could not do that."

"I think I have heard of queens who have worked rather than starve," he answers drily.

"There have been queens who were not ladies."

He makes no answer. This sort of fencing amounts to nothing. With a cold, dreary, angry feeling he knows well what is to come.

"You will relinquish this — this person — sweetheart is, I believe, the term for girls in her station in life whose every aspiration must be tinctured with vulgarity." Then a light gleams in her cruel black eyes. "Perhaps," she says deliberately, "it is some other connection, and you have not really thought of marrying her!"

His face is scarlet with shame. How can women be so

bitterly inhuman toward their own sex? If she were not his mother and in her own house, he would order her out of his sight.

"Miss Marshall is one of the ladies that men respect involuntarily," he answers in a meaning tone. "You ask them in marriage at the beginning, not at the end of courtship."

"Ah," in a tone of frigid mockery, "young men are often over hasty, and change their minds."

"I shall not change mine," he answers in a deep incisive tone. "Celia Marshall wears my ring of troth-plight upon her finger, and until she gives it back of her own accord, I am her loyal lover. Now you know all. How you gained the clue you have, is a mystery to me."

Something in his words suggests to her fertile mind that she holds still another trump card. She will not play that out to him.

"Oh," she says with fine, cutting scorn, "you think because I sit here in retirement and do not soil the tips of my fingers with the common rabble, I can know nothing, hear nothing, of the great world outside. I have a maid trusty enough to attend to such matters. She might even disport herself in one of your Mrs. Marshall's fashionable bonnets. Any knowledge can be obtained for a little money."

"Mother," he says, "there is another point in which your secret knowledge has not informed you. While you and my aunts have sat here wrapped in the mantle of old-time traditions, the world has moved onward to broader, grander, more generous heights. It asks now what manner of soul animates its men and women, not what bonds of custom have enfolded them. Mrs. Howarth — and you can hardly question her standing — has taken Miss Marshall under her fostering care, would adopt her as a child tomorrow if she stood alone in the world and had need of sheltering, comforting love. She was here at Newport,

Mrs. Howarth's honored guest, and was paid the most delicate deference. Mrs. Howarth's chaperonage, so rarely bestowed, is a passport to any circle."

"She should be ashamed to waste it upon a milliner's daughter, and a girl whose pictures may adorn a club-house or the room of any adventurer who chooses to buy them. Surely, surely, this would be high honor for *my* daughter-in-law!" and she gives a mocking laugh with its forced, hateful ring, while her face is wreathed in that supreme selfishness which fills him with abhorrence. "It comes to this without further words, Fairfax — you shall *not* marry this girl. I forbid you."

He inherits some of the old Fairfax will, though its adamantine forces have been ground down a little by contact with the world, where, after all, the Fairfax blood is only a small factor. He rises now in the true dignity of a respectful gentleman, though he tries hard not to despise this hard, eager, black-eyed shrew before him, and says bravely: "I expect to marry Miss Celia Marshall, if it is ten years from this."

"Oh, you will!" How dare he forget what is due his mother! "Well," she goes on in a merciless tone, "fathers have cursed their sons for such disrespect, is there anything to prevent a mother from doing it?"

"Nothing," he answers with infinite, insolent disdain. "Since high birth, pure breeding, and fine culture interpose no objection, there is nothing."

Her mother's pride in him is curiously touched as he stands there, lofty, daring, with a bravery of the soul that she in some dim way recognizes, the glorious embodiment of courageous young manhood — for it is not mere obstinacy. She too thinks of what his sons might be with a properly born and reared mother, but it hardens instead of softening her. No old French marquise could be more particular about the purity of her race.

"See here," she says, unlocking a drawer. "Your

aunt Fairfax's will is precisely like Elizabeth's. At best, the doctor thinks she can last but a few months longer. We always thought she would go first. I seem to have inherited all the strength of the family. While I have the delicacy of a pure ancestry, mine is not a weak, flaccid, decaying power. And this is my will. Read it, and judge whether you wish me to sign it."

She lays it before him. If she is the last of her race, all of Sherrard House is hers, since it was her grandfather's, and she married her cousin, the heir to half of it. There are some legacies to members of the Fairfax family, and the old heirlooms are divided; all the rest goes to my son, Fairfax Sherrard, — a handsome fortune indeed! — on condition he does not marry Celia Marshall. If he should so far forget the respect due to his family and marry her, then the place is to be sold to entire strangers, and the proceeds are to found an institution to be known as Sherrard Hospital for women and children. It is all drawn with such careful nicety that the strictest law could discover no flaw in it. Under this reading he is to have five thousand dollars and his father's library.

"Mother," he says in a voice of bitter contempt, "for selfish and unrelenting cruelty you certainly must exceed most women. The soft, feminine tenderness and the mother's yearning affection of which we prate, finds no room in your soul."

"I know my duty as a mother, I also understand my duty to my race. Better no descendants than those one would blush to own. I shall sign my will this afternoon. You know now what to expect."

She makes no appeal to affection or consideration. She did not marry Anthony Sherrard because she loved him, but because it was absolutely necessary to unite the claimants to Sherrard House. He was nearly eight years younger than she, and soon gave up the struggle against her imperious will, and sank into a meek, polished gentle-



man. There is no particular reason why the vulgar passion of love such as shepherds and milkmaids revel in should be necessary to one of the higher realm.

"Perhaps," he remarks with cutting irony, "since you have taken it upon yourself to dispossess me of all voice in any matrimonial question, you may also have selected a wife for me!"

"I have," she answers composedly. "It is Margaret Fairfax—they live just out of Rochester, you know. Margaret is nineteen, very well looking, accomplished, and her father would gladly accept the honor of our alliance."

The Fairfax and Sherrard lines seem to cross everywhere. Gifford Fairfax is rich as well. His eldest son is abroad—an ignoble descendant of a noble line, if indeed this can be called nobility in a democratic country. The second has married an heiress, and the daughter is offered to him. He saw her some three years ago, and thought her underbred, passionate in temper, and generally disagreeable.

"I have but one answer to make. My faith is already given, and I shall keep my word loyally."

She bows. He cannot tell by her rigid face whether she is touched or not by his defection. Then he comes a step nearer, he reaches out for her hand, and cries out in a voice that might almost move a stone,—

"Mother!"

She draws back her hand as if his very touch would soil the fine family dignity.

"You are no son of mine until you obey. The Hebrews of old knew how to treat disobedient children."

How strange that the grand old book of books can be stretched to cover everything!

Fairfax Sherrard goes up to his luxurious room. There is a ridiculous and grim sense of humor in his soul, as if his mother might be emulating that other heroic woman who attempted to sweep away the Atlantic. Everything has

changed so much, while his mother has sat here wrapped in her formal ceremonies and threadbare traditions, utterly destitute of any vital human interest. People with wider, finer souls pity her and despise the narrow selfishness instead of honoring it. Of what real account is such a race to the busy, active world continually demanding the best in soul and body? If it were not so silly and egotistical it would be pitiful.

Then he remembers that with Aunt Elizabeth's munificent gift and some four or five hundred dollars at his banker's, the furniture, pictures and well chosen bric-a-brac in his room at the city, and a few valuable diamonds, he is at once reduced to the estate of a poor man; and he feels forlornly helpless, as if suddenly stranded on some unfriendly shore. There is his education—he is neither lawyer, doctor, or clergyman. He might take the foreign correspondence of some business establishment, only he knows nothing about business. There is stockbroking—under the influence of such men as Mr. Howarth—well there are certain methods of acquiring riches that Mr. Howarth has set his face against like adamant. Not one penny of his would ever pull a fellow through a wild scheme in which shrewdness was but another term for dishonesty.

And what then became of his plans for the rehabilitation of Sherrard House? He and Celia must begin quite outside among the thorns and thistles. Had their love been forbidden fruit? Was an honest, perfect, loyal regard a thing to be punished, and the mocking stain of selfish interest put upon marriage vows the deed to be approved? It looked so. Oh, how old and weary and worn out the world was! and he sighed.

There was no use of encountering his mother again, indeed he knew she would refuse to see him. He packed a few trinkets and keepsakes, put in some articles of clothing, and then wondered what he had better do. He could

not meet Celia just then — he had half a mind to go out to Rochester. Then he remembered somewhere in that vicinity he had a clerical friend who had tried love in a cottage. It was very new, sweet, fragrant love when he saw it, almost five years before. Could he not judge a little ?

He knew what Celia's verdict would be, but she could not understand all he had meant to do for her, the ease, the delight, the richness of culture that wealth could give. She of all women needed the broader outlook to enable her to come up to the gracious heights she was so eminently fitted to adorn. But hidden away in some stuffy flat, having to count every penny and consider the cost of gloves and flowers and carriages when one wanted to go to a reception or a matinee ! He had passed the juvenescence of youth that despises money with a lofty indifference to the many pleasures it brings. He had been trained to its luxuries, and it was not so easy at eight-and-twenty to forego them.

He found his friend in a pretty rural town on the edge of outlying farms. The weather had cleared up, the golden purple bloom of Indian summer was in the air. Here was the quaint modern church aping antiquity, the rectory with hooded windows and hooded gables, and vines about it, but somehow it had a rather neglected look, as if it needed a gardener to set the grounds right again.

The two friends met most cordially. There was something positively hungry in the clasp of Purcell's hand, an eager light in his eyes, as he drew his visitor into the study ; and his voice rang with the notes of welcome.

"You don't know, old fellow, how good it is to get a whiff of fresh, living air once in a while, not exactly the air of mountain wilds, but of cities and of stirring work and live men, earnest purposes, and all that. One does get rusty, a good deal alone by one's self, with no higher minds

for friction. What talks we used to have! I shall keep you until I drain you quite dry, Sherrard. You know you used to say you felt like a squeezed orange after one of our talks."

"I am sure you are welcome to the best you can find in my life of idleness!" laughed the visitor.

"And the life of idleness has its fine uses. You can go about and pick up so many things — choice bits, only you do not come around half often enough with your precious pack to us poor fellows, to whom your crumbs are a feast."

The study that had presented such an exquisite appearance at its first fitting up had grown decidedly shabby. The curtains were faded in ugly streaks, the carpet dingy and worn. The books had a tumbled-about appearance, some put in upside down, while the table was not in an orderly litter, and mixed up with children's playthings; even a small chair with one broken rocker stood beside the rather abused study chair: but Archibald Purcell did not allow his guest's attention to linger long upon these matters. He talked it away to other themes.

"You have some children?" Sherrard said presently.

"Yes, two boys. Mrs. Purcell has not been in real good health since the birth of the latter, ten months ago. She was away awhile this summer, indeed, I have felt quite anxious about her."

He looked nervous, worried, now that he had come back to the cares of life.

"Our baby has been very cross; why, we cannot tell, as he seems healthy and strong, and it has been a great tax upon her strength. We did start with a nurse, but servants were so expensive."

The elder child found its way to the study with one brief excuse, — "Mamma's head ached." Purcell took him on his knee, a bright, irrepressible little fellow, whose main desire seemed to be to lead the conversation. Then

supper was announced. The "help" was a rather refined-looking American girl who was evidently above her station, or below it, and whose refinement was mostly in the delicacy of her face. Mrs. Purcell, the bright, pretty girl of five years ago, was a rather careworn woman, fretted by each untoward little incident, and yet desirous of making everything appear at its best estate before her husband's guest.

The ease and elegant grace to which Sherrard was so accustomed was entirely deficient. Both babies worried; mother and maid tried to persuade them into loveliness, and failed. Presently Mrs. Purcell asked Carrie to take the youngest up stairs, which she did unwillingly.

"You see, Mr. Sherrard," the young wife said apologetically, "girls are difficult to obtain in a place like this, and you cannot always have the kind you wish. It seems to me Carrie would enjoy her meal much better to take care of the child first and then let me relieve her, but the only manner in which I can keep her is to allow her to be one of the family. She is excellent in some points, but I suppose there are trials everywhere. Now let us go back to our more enjoyable talk."

Afterward Purcell had to leave his friend while he devoted some time to the nursery. Then they took a long stroll in the early moonlight and talked over the friends they had both known and enjoyed. Purcell could hardly bear to part with him for the night.

"You can't think what a luxury it is to go over all these points and beliefs and speculations once more, and see the progress that is made in the world, even if you must keep far on the outside."

Fairfax Sherrard sat and mused when he reached the guest-chamber, perhaps the freshest and most orderly place in the house. Would he turn from Celia some time in the future and feast himself on the coming of a friend, while she was busy with household cares? Would their

house ever come to have this look, as if there was not time enough to perform the duties of life properly, to say nothing of partaking of its enjoyments?

Yet he found his friend an enthusiastic and conscientious clergyman, with the weight of both souls and bodies upon him. Mrs. Purcell he saw only at meal time; indeed not always then, for on some occasions she was too tired and was lying down. On the third and last night of his stay the talk turned upon marriage.

"See here," said Purcell in his eager, forcible manner, "why do not men like you with everything at their command marry, — not a mere woman of fashion; there are some true and noble ones left, thank God! — and make one of the ideal homes, easily practicable, too, if one has the will and means. The world is starving, almost dying out for just such lovely places, and they would do more toward making a fine race of men and women than all the sermons that were ever preached."

"Suppose I were not a rich man, what would you advise then?"

Purcell glanced at him intently, then colored delicately.

"Because you think I have fallen so below my ideal?" he asked abruptly.

"My dear friend, no, I was not thinking of you, but — of another case in which I might have to advise," and he gave a half smile. "You could not consider me so —"

"Do not apologize," Purcell interrupted. "I blundered into it myself. I have been giving the subject a good deal of study, and am amazed at the careless, irresponsible teaching one meets with. We give every other matter due consideration, here we follow some preference or fancy, and idealize the future much beyond what it will bear. I almost shrink from marrying a couple nowadays, the after-disappointment in many instances is so keen, so bitter. There is the temperament and training which is often so dissimilar, the imprudence of the step which

entails so many hardships. I know this does not sound brave, but single lives may be made fine and useful and generous and noble beyond what any unfortunate marriage can bring forth. We must be trained to count the cost."

Fairfax Sherrard started. There was a large cost to count in his case.

"Understand, my dear friend, that nothing has happened to me beyond the ordinary chances. My wife and I are endeared by countless fine ties that we did not dream of when we married, yet it is not unalloyed pleasure. If I told the honest truth, I should say that I was by far too poor to marry for pleasure, for the intimate and delightful companionship. Duty of course remains, and we are both brave enough to accept our lot, and try to bear each other's burdens. But one cannot have the luxuries of life on a small income. Laura had to be away two months in the summer, which we could ill afford, and now we are trying to make it up. We each have our hands full of mostly separate duties. Could I read her a magazine article with a baby crying in her arms? Could she go out and enjoy a walk with me, when she was so tired in brain and nerve and body that her only relief would be a quiet half hour on the sofa? So these delights we are forced to put by, and life is hampered. Whether the denying of self makes amends for the loss of improvement, is a wider question. So if your friend is poor," with a quaint little smile, "and has fine tastes, longs for leisure, intellectual enjoyment, even the finer pleasures of life, tell him not to add to it the all-potent question as to how we shall be clothed and fed, until he really sees a way. There is a wise prudence even in this question, and the lack of this brings about bitter results in our divorce courts. But you of all other men will never have to consider this point. Yours will be only how to make a wise choice."

Should he tell him here and now? Would he like to

see Celia so encumbered with cares, forced to put by her painting, or, sadder fate, forced to work to the utmost for the daily needs of life, with the troubled face of Mrs. Purcell?

"Then — you hardly believe in love in a cottage?"

"If one has elected it, let him pray with all his soul to keep love there, strive with all his might. But he must not hope for too many things, and he must not shrink from sacrifices."

A long array of sacrifices would be his, truly. His love of ease and luxury shrank from it.

They talked until nearly midnight. While Purcell placed a true and noble love above all meaner consideration, his eyes had been cleared by experience. Life was no rose-colored dream, but a daily fight, the little gained to-day sometimes lost on the morrow; and the bravest soul often disheartened.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Honor in its indefinite character is something superior to law and morality. We do not reason it out, we feel it. It is a religion."—OCTAVE FEUILLET.

CELIA MARSHALL had settled to her work again after her most delightful holiday. For the present she was not to think about marriage, but her art. Her lover's generous tenderness had touched her deeply.

There was another point in this long engagement that was very grateful to her. She wanted to establish her reputation beyond any mere girlish caprice. It was a life work, a life love, such as Mrs. Linthorpe's had been. There were moments when she would gladly have put by the greater part of Fairfax Sherrard's wealth for the sake of having him nearer her social standing. There was no undue pride in this; indeed, she accepted his position as something to which she must strive to raise herself by all the efforts in her power. All the little niceties of society usage were carefully studied, her voice, her pronunciation, the grace of her manner, was gone over with the closest criticism, quite as if it were some third person. She read the books he admired, she studied the poems he loved, she was busy and happy. Little notes passed between them now and then,—she was still too shy to write love-letters. The sacredness of her thoughts could not be committed to paper, it brushed off the delicate bloom. As yet she had not known the urgent need, the exclusive, absorbing love, the pervading and transfixing earnest attained by one's profounder consciousness passing over to another.

Mrs. Marshall had taken up her fall business. Truth to tell, some spell kept her at Westwater. To go away

even for a short distance was like wrenching her soul out of its proper moorings. Mr. Marshall had returned, and Bertie made her a day's visit. He had grown mentally, as well as in physical proportions. His health and perfect coloring gave him a peculiar boyish beauty; his rapid, dazzling manner was akin to Daisy's.

In this brief while he had quite outgrown his mother's authority. Papa was quoted for everything. Aunt Kate and grandmamma were of paramount importance.

"Why do you go on keeping the store, mamma?" he asked imperiously! "You do not need to earn any more money for us — papa said so. And Daisy has such a pretty house — papa took me there yesterday, and Daisy cried, but oh, is n't she — I don't know what boys *can* say, mamma, they don't like the girl adjectives. Well, Daisy's splendid."

Bertie was to begin school at the Academy next week. "No more public school for me!" in an exalted tone. "I am going to college too. And papa is to buy me a pony — he has sights of money. I had a pony in Virginia, but it was too much trouble to bring home, and papa is going to buy me a finer one. And I can have money to spend."

She glanced into the eager, excited face. The money to spend, the pleasures and luxuries were so much to him. What discipline would this be for the years to come? Daisy had a curious self-consideration that stood her in stead of some higher virtues, but Bertie lived in the present moment. What came to-morrow would be provided for some way, if he only could have the delight to-day.

"When I get my pony I'll ride down and show you," with a touch of patronage. "And some time, when I am older, papa is going to buy me a dog-cart. Won't that be gay? I have just the loveliest room at Aunt Kate's, and the waiter stands behind us at table just as they do in hotels. I tell you it's toney living."

The mother's heart swelled within her. No longing for her, — "they never talked about her," Bertie naïvely admitted. She was to be crowded out, and, saddest of all, she felt powerless to help it. In these brief, joyous visits she could make no lasting impression on the volatile child, who so easily adapted himself to the greater enjoyments of wealth.

Daisy came in the next morning.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, "I was so surprised at the visit—I suppose Bertie told you. But for the child I should not have known him. He seems so much taller than I remember him, quite the *grande seigneur*, indeed; but desperately pale. He said he was quite well now, and had recovered from his troublesome cough. Oh, can nothing be done to bring you two together? You should be living in ease and luxury, and have your rightful position, your share of his wealth. I spoke of you —"

"Daisy! Daisy!" The tone was one of intense pain.

"Mamma, I shall speak of your love and your devotion to us all," said the daughter proudly. "What did you do that was wrong — for it could not have been wrong to go away from that horrible home. You worked there. People sometimes talk as if you never did anything until you took the store; but I remember how you used to sit and sew your poor, sweet eyes out making button-holes and all that, to get us bread. I hate the very thought of it;" and Daisy stamped her foot fiercely. "I had almost forgotten, but it came back so vividly when I talked to papa, only, do you know, it seems as if it must be some other man; he is so changed. He is a true gentleman as to manners."

"He was a gentleman years before," said her mother.

"He proposed to take me out driving, and I consented. I think he would like to see Celia, but I should be afraid of her clear eyes looking him through and finding some sham or dregs at the bottom. He feels very proud of her."

Bertie settled to school and to his pony. The boys who had known him were hardly allowed to know him now, being vouchsafed merely a patronizing nod as he passed. It cut the mother's heart. He was taking up "world's scorn" at an early age.

Celia spent several days now and then with her mother, but she was quite urgent about the new arrangement. In October her lover went home for his aunt's funeral, visited his friend, and then some connections. Mrs. Sherrard learned this. Few steps that her son took but what came to her knowledge sooner or later. Little did he imagine her perfect system of espionage. Now her heart relented a little toward him. Some other mother's might have softened, hers was too strong.

From thence he went westward. If he had been fancy free, Miss Fairfax's charms were not of a kind to awaken his admiration, so he scarcely gave her a passing thought. By day and night the choice to be made was ever present. How could he resign all that was as very life to him! He thought of his friend, and yet Purcell meant no such strait as that of Sherrard's. To his meagre salary of seven or eight hundred and his house, such an income as Celia and Fairfax could have made, would have been affluence.

Mrs. Sherrard brought matters to a crisis. If Celia Marshall would give up her son of her own volition, he might in a moment of passion espouse Margaret Fairfax. She had kept this for her reserve stroke. At her dictation the faithful abigail wrote a letter, and when she mailed it — for no one else would have been trusted — she brought back a paper with a marked account of an elopement in high life. Silly and headstrong, Margaret Fairfax had eloped with a young man in her father's employ, a kind of upper gardener, hurried to the step by the knowledge that her father's choice might be laid before her. That Fairfax sent it to his mother with infinite

relish was most true. Could Celia Marshall have done such a thing? He remembered, too, the rather good-looking but illiterate fellow, and had been disgusted with a freedom he had detected between them. So the proud old blood could stoop to this! At least such a marriage as he contemplated was honorable in the estimation of the sensible world.

Celia's letter came to her at Mrs. Howarth's. She had been out to a pretty artistic tea, given by a party of young ladies, and the Howarth carriage brought her home. There were visitors in the drawing-room, but she did not care to go down. As she was drawing off her gloves, her eye fell upon the letter. The handwriting she did not know, but the postmark sent a little thrill through her. She had heard from Fairfax that very day, but it seemed as if his letter was a little labored, lacked the spontaneous grace that rendered them so exquisite.

She laid aside her bonnet and wrap, and sat down to read. The envelope was of a plain business kind, betokening no particular delicacy. "Madam," it began — "Mrs. Sherrard desires me to write to you on some matters concerning her son."

Celia sat in amazement many seconds without going further. Some swift presentiment told her what to expect, but she could never have imagined such deliberate, cruel selfishness, such an insult to be offered from one woman to another. The writer went briefly over the ground, seeming to be amazed that a girl who had espoused a life of labor, who had been reared in her mother's millinery store, should dare to aspire to the heir of Sherrard House; should expect to win a husband by her base, mercenary plots, even if she had imposed upon too credulous society with her arts of the counter. Mr. Fairfax Sherrard was expected to marry his cousin, whom he had gone to visit. Failing in this — if Miss Marshall dared hold him by promises speciously extorted, Sherrard House

and a mother's affection would no longer be his. "Neither you nor your husband will ever step inside of it while I live, nor after I am dead. With me my race shall end, and my last will shall show to the world that a Sherrard knows how to punish an ingrate son."

After Celia's first perusal, she sat looking at it with strained, fascinated eyes, as if the power to move them had left her brain. A dull, numbing sensation, as if one might be perishing from cold, crept over her, shuddered through the warm pulses, surged slowly, heavily against her heart, and it seemed as if she might be dying. The lights faded, but even in the obscurity those bitter words show like a tracery of flame, burning as they go. From his mother!

Celia did not cry out nor even clasp her hands in those moments of extreme anguish. The weary, fluttering breath returned with a keen pain, there was a throbbing in her temples, a ringing in her ears as if she had been miles under the sea. Oh! Oh! If any mother had pleaded tenderly for a son she could not yield to another's love, Celia must have been generously moved. She was capable of the most entire self-abnegation.

Then she tried to think in a slow, dull way, with painful labor. She had not used any specious or base designs, she had hardly cared at first — it was so new and strange. Any simple friendship would have sufficed her. She had been loth to wear his ring, and had yielded reluctantly; she had made him listen to everything in her past, that could ever be tortured to her discredit by unkind lips. She had told him her hopes and aims. He, knowing all, had chosen her frankly, irrevocably it seemed, and after all this she had come to love him. Had he been a true and loyal lover? Was there no bond in his past that partly held him to another? No, a hundred times no! She would answer for him there. This was some figment, some scheme of another's brain, not any word he had ever given.

But she remembered now how he had always evaded any talk about his mother, sometimes indeed making little comments that had jarred against her tender soul. He must have known the feeling it would create, the breach it would cause, and therein she could not hold him blameless. If he had said — “My mother is steeped in prejudice, and I shall have to fight my way, perhaps marry without her consent, she would have been warned. And with some sad prescience she felt that she could never make up to him what he should lose. He was born for wealth, luxury, leisure, he was like some choice plant that needed favoring circumstances. Not even her most devoted love could make him forget what he had given up for her. The sunshine and perennial summer must be his; he would droop in a trying and uncongenial atmosphere, while it would brace her, gird her up to effort. Was she the stronger?

Reverently she gathered up the sweet dream. It had never been for her — it was a sad, sad mistake; a sorrow that wrenched every fibre of her being. Like a corpse she spread it out tenderly, she crossed the pale, lifeless hands, shrouding it with sweet remembrance that it might be fair to look upon even in after days. But the service and the open grave were all yet to come — oh, how could she stand by and hear the dull thud of the brown, ugly earth!

She threw herself upon the bed. She hardly seemed conscious, and yet neither did she sleep. All night long a wild desire to fly, crossed with a sense of baffled escape, a fruitless struggle like that of some wild hunted thing at bay with no chance of release, haunted her. She must meet inquiring looks, vague questions, and oh, grief of griefs! she must choose for him the quick, sharp pang, rather than the lingering decline when love itself might fail; for to cost him so high a price and not be able to repay would be infinitely worse than death to her.

Some time, but it seemed as if she had gone through cycles of existence, she saw the gray dawn steal through the open window. Sounds came to her in a dim, vague way. There was a stir about the house, servants rustling up and down with soft-shodden feet; a bell with its summons, noises in the street. This was her pretty silken gown she had worn to the tea, these her faded flowers.

There was a party of travellers staying at the house, delightful people, of whom she had scarcely had a glimpse. This day was to be devoted to them. She rose and glanced at her haggard face, her strained eyes and ashen lips. There was only one place in all the whole wide world where she could go,—home to her own mother's arms and heart.

She rose presently and changed her dress. Fairfax said she always wore soft grays that made her look like a sweet little nun. How many tender sentences of his she should remember. She wrote a brief note with trembling hand, and then rang for a cup of coffee.

"Give this to Mrs. Howarth as they go in to breakfast," she said.

Then she gathered up a few articles in her satchel of fragrant leather, put on her hat, and fastened her veil. It was quite easy to step out quietly, but when she reached the street the fresh morning air sent a shiver through her, and she turned sick and faint. Happy, busy people were going everywhere. She said, with the despair of youth, that happiness for her was ended.

Did all vehicles crawl along this morning? The moments were endless and weary. At last she was in the car and she noted idly the smoky red October sunshine—the very last day—shining on well-nigh leafless trees. Does it warm them any? It does not warm her.

Through the old streets she has come to know so well. Oh, how happy they were when they first came to this store, that is flung in their faces as a kind of disgrace!



She opens the door — Miss Parker and two girls are at work. Why can she not make them look real?

“O Miss Marshall! Your mother is up stairs,” the surprised woman exclaimed.

She went up softly. Her mother stood by the window, studying a picture. She stretched out her hands blindly.

“Celia! Celia!”

Such a tone of intense, apprehensive inquiry, as she folded her child to her heart.

“Oh, mamma,” with a weary, fluttering sigh — “I have come back to you. We are both widowed by a crueller stroke than death. Let us comfort each other, if there is any comfort left.”

“Oh, my darling! I have so feared it was a mistake.”

Then Celia sobbed, softly, infrequently, the dry sobs whose tears are inward. But presently she roused and opened her satchel.

“You must read it,” she said, “and then I shall send it to him. He might at least have warned me.”

The indignant blood mounted to Mrs. Marshall’s brow; and in her devotion she could have crossed weapons with the other mother with such thrusts that they would have hurt to her dying day.

“But he will not give you up,” she said. “Only a coward would yield under such a pressure!”

“Mamma, I must give him up. He will think he is quite true and strong, but I know. All his life has been one delight of luxury, freedom from care and anxiety. He would not know how to take up the burden, and it would drag and chafe and wear. I should see him grow dispirited, I should know he was longing for the ease and leisure. He is just in harmony now, in any other place his life would be a discord, and it would hurt me cruelly. It would take my inspiration, my life. No, it must end.”

“I think it is better,” the mother replied from the far-reaching, unsupplied depth of her own nature. “It will

be very hard, for I think you have begun truly to love him."

"Yes, I have begun to love him. I did not dare at first, it was so rare and wonderful, as if it might be forbidden fruit to me. And so it is. Even fair as it promised, it might have taken me out of paradise, that country where the soul is at rest with itself and not tossed about with vain strivings. And mamma, all *her* cruelty was quite needless. I could have done what I shall do with a much kinder pressure. Now I must write to him and have it over."

The tense nervous pitch told her mother that this was the best course. She opened her dainty writing desk, one of Celia's earliest purchases, and seated her at it.

"Do not go away, mamma," reaching out her hand. "I shall feel stronger if you are here."

Still it was a long letter. She sealed the other carefully within it. Then she said entreatingly, —

"Mamma, will you explain to Mrs. Howarth? I do not feel as if I could go over the thorny ground again."

Afterward she lay on the sofa, her eyes closed and tearless, but the fine-drawn lines in her face betraying the struggle. Her mother comforted as only a high and brave soul made perfect through suffering could comfort.

The letter brought Fairfax Sherrard back in hot haste and indignation, and at once established Mrs. Howarth's faith in him. Celia was at her mother's, not exactly ill, but far from well. She had resolved that in the future he must consider her own proper sphere, not the borrowed enchantment with which she had been so surrounded.

The man's pride did wince a little at the sign over the store door, at the uncompromising business aspect of all things. In his heart he almost cursed Thomas Marshall for leaving them in this narrow round when he could so easily have lifted them to prosperity. True, he had been here before, but he had not even then considered it her

home. Now he thought of it as a dim possibility of what might be theirs.

The dainty parlor, too, had been shorn of some of its glories. Mrs. Marshall had sent Daisy the piano, with the almost certainty that it would not be her home a great while longer, some other beautiful belongings, and, above all, it missed Daisy's graceful touches, her brilliant, vital presence. It struck him as dull and cold, verging on the common, a kind of respectable middle-class poverty. Could he endure anything like that?

It is one of the curious characteristics of such natures that they are prone to fly off at the opposite extreme. His friend Purcell's pinching poverty and discomfort in spite of affection and courageous endurance, the many failures others had made, were ever present. Could he rise above this level? Perhaps he understood too truly the spiritual indigence of his own nature.

Still he pleaded with all the enthusiasm and persistence of the lover and the loyal gentleman ; for he did love her sincerely, and in some vague, formless way he felt that she only could strike the key-note to his soul, — that any other hand would make discord. The passionate earnestness was grateful to her aching heart, yet it did not convince her. Was it not more of gentlemanly chivalry than knightly honor?

"Have you a correct knowledge of what is in your mother's will?" she asked presently.

He flushed painfully, but did not answer.

"Do you remember," she said softly, "that there was a time when I came to you with the obstacles that I felt certain lay in the way of an engagement? I shrank at no truth. I ask you to do the same. A man's courage should not be less than that of a timid, trembling girl."

"It will pain you to hear," he answered hoarsely, as if the breath strangled him.

"Still I *must* hear."

He looked at her wonderingly. Timid and shrinking even now, yet brave to endure to the uttermost.

He told her, softening all that was in his power.

"Some diabolic ingenuity devised it," he went on fiercely. "It is so hedged about with instructions, lest I might in some unimaginable manner be able to buy it back, not that it ever would be in my power," bitterly. "An inheritance like that is quite beyond a poor man's reach; and the most crushing thought of all, my darling, is that I should be able to do so little for you. I am a useless, fine gentleman. I know not how to toil or spin. Such work as I can get will not be the kind that leads to a speedy fortune, and to make money rapidly one must have money. Much as I desire it, I could not deliberately take my neighbor's, as is too frequently done to-day, the one man's prosperity built up on the ruin of others; and so we shall have to begin life in appalling hardness, there is no real courage in denying it. Travel, leisure, lovely surroundings, guests that we should appreciate, will not be for our busy lives where the great struggle is for bread. O my darling, can I bring you to this?"

To another man she would have said clearly, "I have never had wealth, you know, and I am not afraid of work." But if these sacrifices applied to her, did they not apply tenfold more strongly to him? The excitements of truly refined and polished society were a constant stimulus to him. Take them away, — ah, surely he would droop and become disheartened. When she watched the heavy eyes, the spiritless smile, the weary step, would it not sting her to the quick, add to her unhappiness. She missed in him the fine, inciting buoyancy of her mother.

"You will see presently that my way is the wiser," she answered slowly, but with no weakness. "There would be a shadow on the new life at its outset, a mother's anger —"

"There are mothers and mothers," he interrupted pas-

sionately. "Mine is no longer a woman, but a link in a family pedigree, a blank, hard wall, so spiked at the top, so bolted and fortified, that no human affection can reach her. I knew there would be an issue between us, but I hoped by patient waiting—" he paused; it was her death he had contemplated as opening to him the portals of possessorship in Sherrard House, and as the knowledge flashed upon him a gloomy frown swept over his face. "I know you are shocked, my darling, but the woman who could establish such a system of French espionage as to get at the unbreathed secret of both souls, and write that merciless, cold-blooded letter, is not worthy even of a son's respect; his love she has never asked."

"Yet she has been generous to you," Celia protested weakly.

"Generous,—well, in a way. My father left everything to her. Aunt Livingstone did the same, so will Aunt Fairfax. There is no one but me for her to lavish her money upon. She does not care for her son, but for Fairfax Sherrard. The pride of some of these old families is an insatiable monster."

It came to Celia then that what if some day he should stand between a son or a daughter's happiness! He too had a great deal of family pride. It would be a bitter thing to give up Sherrard House.

Still, the case was left undecided. He would not accept his freedom. For her there would be weeks of painful waiting, and yet, at the last she might come to think better of him for not seeing too clearly his own desire.

She went back to her painting, and now spent much of her time at Mrs. Linthorpe's. The Howarths' house was like a hotel through the fall and early winter, with noted guests coming and going continually. The city, too, was unusually gay and delightful. Eminent singers charmed in opera; some distinguished actors drew crowded and

appreciative audiences, and added a zest to receptions and dinners. Fairfax Sherrard was in the midst, the charm of many circles. How could he resign such a position and sink into obscurity?

Mrs. Howarth was proud of his loyalty to Celia, and yet there was an unspoken misgiving. He had discussed some business projects with Mr. Howarth. There was little opportunity to make a sudden fortune honestly, and the other methods had Mr. Howarth's sincere detestation.

"Sherrard is not in deadly, solemn earnest, as the man should be who will have to live in the light of Celia Marshall's clear eyes. She requires the same truth and intensity from others as she gives herself. Think of her having to bridge over unstable places, to shut her eyes to weaknesses that she could never inspire, to comfort and urge on tenderly because of wavering, shrinking footsteps. He is of very fine clay, but still clay, not the solemn, sparkling grain of the marble, not the fine enduring honor of the pure steel. He has been reared to prosperity, and he has not the stamina to buffet with adversity. His virtues would show threadbare. I am quite certain she understands this, and it gives her endurance that grand tone and quality."

"Yet I cannot bear to think of their separating," Mrs. Howarth said regretfully. "In that case I am almost sure Celia would remain single."

"My dear, we shall have advanced women immeasurably when we no longer make marriage the absolute necessity of a complete and lovely life; when we bring single women and single men to the front, who from some high motives have not changed their estate, and respect them in it, their work, their heroic, blameless lives. Do we ever sneer at a Sister of Charity because a husband does not lead her about? And may not a woman or a man live in truer accord with the fine and high principles that should govern souls, than one half of the

married people we meet, to whom the bond has become a burden, or is a tie whose every responsibility is evaded."

"I used to think a good deal of this. I had some high views, I had position and fortune to carry them out, and yet"—with a smile rarely sweet—"I married you."

He came and kissed her fondly. "Did either of us lose by the waiting?" he asked in an endearing tone.

Mrs. Linthorpe was not as patient with her hero. Her enthusiasm would have set him to work at once on the lowest round of the ladder, a spectacle for men and angels as to what a loyal lover could do. They had warm, vexatious talks, indeed, it was for this cause that his calls at the studio became more infrequent.

But stern necessity began to stare him in the face when he went one day to an out-of-the-way dealer and sold a diamond, making a fair bargain because he knew its worth. Never had wordly pleasures looked so seductive to him.

Would it not be possible for him and Celia to remain best friends, and perhaps relinquish other dreams?

She cut the Gordian knot. Just after the holidays his mother sent for him. Miss Fairfax was lying at the point of death. Perhaps, too, she was a little afraid that her son's endurance would be of a grander quality than her measure of it.

Celia was at home and he came over to Westwater. It would be most unfilial not to go, though he owed his mother scant respect.

"Yes, you must go," Celia said. Very fascinating was this handsome gallant lover, and yet was there not something rarer and finer needed for the love of a lifetime? She crossed the room and returned. "You will take this to her, and tell her that I sent it, that it is my betrothal ring, and that its gleam is not more strong and pure than my word."

It dropped into his hand. He sprang up passionately, his face flushed, decisive.

"Celia! Celia!" It was like a wail of some lost spirit.  
"No, you cannot give me up!"

She noted the way he placed the decision.

"It is best. It is right. We are not the two people to take up such a life as would be ours, the result would be too meagre for the sacrifice. Apart, you with your wealth and I with my genius may evolve serene and useful existences where the other would be hampered, shorn of its rightful fruit, of its pure endeavor. I told you once that a genius might set one apart; it may be in the richness of self-sustaining strength other needs are less urgent. Let me go my way. Do the duty of yours nobly as you can."

He looked at her with a kind of breathless interest, and the deep sweep of subtle consciousness told him that she had access to a more exalted life than he could reach, a life that would weary him, rasp him with its strain and futility. The proud poise of the small yet finely shaped head, the delicate sweep of the neck and shoulders, the broad brow a thought too high for Greek sensuousness, the fine, spirited nose that could breathe nothing but pure air, the clear, pale cheeks shadowed by the long lashes, the mobile mouth with some firm lines settling softly down to the rounded chin; but it was not the flowing lines, nor softness of coloring, nor rich yet pure contours that so moved him. He had seen before that curious spiritual exaltation, as if a snow-cloud had been wrapped about her, or that she shone in pure auroral lights calm and clear.

"You are right," he said with the deep force of inner conviction. "As a rich man I should not be worthy of you, but I might make amends by generous giving of the best I had. As a poor man I should be a clog, a weight, a child for you to soothe in the dark, to inspire and rouse continually. Celia, you make me despise myself, and yet I see what I am with so solemn a distinctness that I dare not deny it. Oh, how came you by this angel strength?



After having failed to reach up to your level a man should go mourning all his days."

"No." Her voice came over a great sea of such tenderness that it well-nigh wrecked her, for she could not cast out the love so interfused with her womanly nature. "Because you *do* see, you may come up to the higher rounds."

"If I might ask — if I might beg such a boon as friendship —"

She knew there must be men in the world who could not content themselves with a second place, who could not endure the agony of being near, yet forever apart. Had she in some way missed this other counterpart soul, or was it somewhere in the far future? For it comforted even her to know she should still be near him, and by a sweet, sad prescience she understood that was not love.

She came near and kissed him on the forehead as a woman kisses the boy who begins to evince a wholesome admiration for her elder and more mature virtues.

"I will be your friend," she said clearly. "Take my ring to *her* with a son's duty. Because one has been stricken blind, another need not bandage his eyes. It was too hastily given. Let the future prove the wisdom of this step."

But when he was gone she covered her face with her hands and wept tears of passionate sorrow, as when one buries a child whose sunny blossoming had not yet unfolded, whose sweetness is yet untasted. Righteous decisions may be bravely executed, but it does not follow that the heart remains unscathed.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"But, after all, peace is not the last word of life, nor the highest symbol of happiness."—OCTAVE FEUILLET.

MRS. MARSHALL had decided to dispose of her business to Miss Parker and a young lady who had worked for her the past two years. She felt now that Celia needed a mother's strengthening, womanly love. That her decision was just, was more than evident to Mrs. Marshall, also that no fear of a life of poverty for herself had influenced her. She took up her work bravely again. Paul Thierry, who had been in Europe with his wife for the past year, returned, and was delighted with the progress his pupil had made. The same minute painstaking characterized her work, quite free from mannerism on the one side, or lifelessness on the other. Mrs. Thierry was dainty and charming as ever, perhaps a trifle less exclusive. She had met people of genius and poverty in some of the higher circles abroad.

The plan of the new home delighted her above measure.

"I can just imagine how lovely it will be," she said to her husband. "And your Mrs. Marshall is handsome enough for a princess. What a pity Celia has not more of her aplomb."

The Archers rejoiced in Celia's prosperity as well. Mrs. Archer had two bright, merry children, whom she was fond of posing in all manner of picturesque attitudes.

"You can't think how we shall miss you," Stephen Archer said regretfully. "I've grown so used to running in to look at Celia's work. You know I have quite a right in her genius. I made half of the discovery at least."

"You were a kind, true friend," and Celia's eyes glistened.

So the papers of transfer were made ready again. It was a much more extensive business than when Mrs. Marshall had taken it.

"And I always said if ever there was a woman born with a genius for millinery, that same woman was Mrs. Marshall," declared Miss Parker in her enthusiastic, chirruping way. "I only hope I shall suit the customers as well. I am sure I have used my utmost endeavor to appropriate every beautiful idea."

"You have been a good, faithful assistant, a more than friend, and heaven only knows how grateful I am to you."

"But it will never seem quite like the same place," and Miss Parker winked her eyes vigorously. It certainly would not do to cry so long before hand. "And how queer it will look to have a new sign over the door. I must go out and order it."

Miss Parker and Miss Allington were to cast their lot together, but they did not need the rooms on the floor above, so they were to be rented again. Mrs. Marshall began the process of dismantling. Mrs. Linthorpe had considerable furniture, so they would take only their choice belongings and a few necessary articles. Daisy and Miss Parker made some selections, the remainder would be sent to auction.

Yet how strange it seemed to go out of the life. There had been seven years of famine, and seven years of — should she call it plenty? Yes, it had been that. Relief from the wearing exactions of poverty, hours of leisure, reading, friends who had made her life rich and warm with their abundant sympathy; and this dearest of all daughter. From the first step she had been inspired by Celia's longing and desire. The child had reached a place that any mother might be proud to see her occupy.

And of the other unanswered prayer? Ah, even now she could not be quite content with "His way," not like our ways. To be persistently kept out of the place to which she felt she had the first, the inalienable right, to know that she must settle to the duties of another home that to all human ken would widen the broad river between them, which neither had tried to cross. Should she have been less proud? more generously forgiving she could not have been.

The Vanduyne carriage stopped before the much-despised store one morning, but blithesome Bertie did not spring out with eager face. Instead the coachman came in and laid a note upon the counter.

"I will take it up stairs," said Miss Parker.

How often some curious presentment shivers over us with no apparent result, and then we walk to the fiery brink at other times, unheeding, until the blinding flash leaves us stunned as by lightning. It was so with her. She opened and read:—

"Eleanor, will you come to me? I am dying."

She dropped into the nearest chair. It was from her mother that Celia had inherited her pure, fine courage. Eleanor Marshall did not shriek nor utter a moan, but it seemed as if she could never breathe again.

Daisy had seen her father now and then, but reports had been encouraging. He was very thin and pale, but the cough was not nearly so troublesome. He went into some society, and there had been no word of warning.

She rose presently, wrapped herself in her cloak, and put on her bonnet, and found the carriage waiting for her. Only one thought rang through her brain — dying! Was this the answer to her prayer?

The quiet waiter opened the door and bowed her up stairs. A woman in the hall motioned her with a slight gesture, and she went toward the room, entered, and the other shut the door.

The room was the perfection of luxury. Bertie had not overpraised it. The lace and linen of the bed, with the heavily wrought initial, the small table with most exquisite appointments, passed before her eyes like a vision and remained there. Pillowed up in a reclining posture, so frail and wasted and old that it seemed at a glance as if it must be his mother, but for the manly token of snowy beard — sat Thomas Marshall.

She came into the room like a radiant, intense, life-giving presence. Her cheek was a trifle flushed by the cold air, the sudden warmth, and the quick ascent. But the royal carriage, the superb health, the fine buoyancy, in part spiritual, the mobile mouth, with its soft, girlish lips that in any other woman might have been a snare, the magnificent eyes, though they had kept many a midnight vigil with tears, touched and stirred the man like an electric shock. He stretched out his wasted hands with the passionate hunger of starvation, and his entreating cry pierced the far depths of her soul.

“Eleanor! Eleanor!”

She came to him. The warm hands revived all the chilling currents of his blood, the lips kissed new life into the others so wan and tremulous. He held her to his heart — was it minutes or hours?

It was not as he had meant to meet her. He had a grand forgiveness prepared. She would sit there by his bedside while he went over the old times, pointed out where she had failed in wifely duty, wifely affection — where her love had shown threadbare and snapped, where a little forbearance, a touch of wisdom, a comprehension of all the virtues, in short, might have changed both lives. His complacency had been so fostered by mother and sister in their adverse views; and his personal vanity, in its longing to whiten itself, had so glossed over its own sins, that they looked quite venial. There were so many mixed motives, so much vague, one-sided reasoning, and with it

all a positive desire to have something to forgive, to offset any feeling she might have in regard to his delinquencies.

In a moment all the subterfuges were swept away. In one blinding, dazzling, pitiless glare, like a broad sheet of lightning, the man saw his own life from the time of his business failure until now, the years when he had neither provided food nor shelter, when her hands had toiled not only for her children, but oh, shame! for money to be wasted in dens of drunkenness!

"I was naked and I was ashamed," pleaded the first transgressor. And looking at his naked soul in that awful moment of self-inspection with all the flimsy wrappings swept away, Thomas Marshall hid his face in shame. That *she* could forgive so grandly. That her warm, sweet lips could touch his soul with their own pure tenderness! A whole long year of joy wrenched out of his life by his own blindness, madness!

"Eleanor, my darling!"

She lifted her brave face full of anguish, full of tears, yet shining like that of an angel. Its beauty was like her affluent vitality, God-given. Now and then we meet a woman so superbly endowed, whose organization seems to comprehend a dozen lives in one.

"Speak to me!" he cried entreatingly. "Let me hear your voice or I shall think it some mocking dream."

"Tom! Husband!" She could not trust her voice any further.

"O Eleanor, what a blind, insensate fool! what a mad-man I have been!"

"Hush," she said softly. "You must not excite yourself or I may be blamed."

"You have been blamed for enough, my poor darling, unjustly, cruelly; wounded for the sins of others. O Eleanor one must believe in a God when human love so suffers, so forgives!"

She bent and kissed the forehead that looked like snow.

"Stand up again and let me look at you. Were you always so beautiful, Eleanor? Or is there something — I can't remember — but it is about a life well used leaving its impress on the face. Hold my hands again. Yours are so warm. You look so strong — oh, it seems almost as if I might drink in strength watching you. Nelly, you were the prettiest of girls when I married you, but that is nothing to what you are now. The picture Bertie has does you no justice. It cannot give the radiant sense of outflowing life!"

"Oh," she cried, "you are so exhausted. What can I do?"

"But I *feel* strong. You cannot think — O Nelly, keep me from dying. Hold me back in your arms, with your very soul. Will me to live, that I may be with you a little while."

"Is it —" and her voice broke.

"It is the wages of sin," bitterly. "I had no need to die here just at middle life, with everything to enjoy. And I was told — last year in San Francisco. I did not believe it. Nelly — I have been worse than your knowledge of me even. And then, when I was warned, I went into the same old excess — a man worth nearly a million! In the horror of that, an awful, clinging longing for life set in, and since then — but it was too late. My frame was shattered. Heart and lungs had been overtaken. All this year I have been trying to build myself up. Ah, if I had come to you! The little remnant of life should have been yours. I did improve during the summer and coughed so much less, but I could not gain any strength. The poison had eaten into my very vitals. Yesterday I had a slight hemorrhage and a severe attack of the dreadful pain, the gasping for breath, when one would pay for it with ounces of gold. Last evening the doctor kindly told me if there was anything left undone —"

"Hush, dear, now you must rest. Are you comfort-

able? Let us talk about the children. You have not seen Celia. She is like me in so many ways, but Daisy has my height and coloring, yet I see more of you in her. She is so happy with her young husband. She has the old bright way that I always liked in you — ”

“Go on. Tell me what you did. I am hungry for it all.”

His eyes were filled with a feverish light, while the rest of his face was in deadly pallor.

Her voice was of the electric kind that carried her audience along with it; flexible, buoyant like her strength, but with a deep, underlying sweetness like the far note of a bird. She would fain have put her head down beside his and cried, but she sat there with the lights coming and going in her face, talking against time, that he might rest. Her story was simply, entrancingly told. How they had worked, how Celia had begun with a girl's unknown genius, and stepped higher and higher, of Stephen Archer and Paul Thierry, of the delightful friendly Van Cleves, of Mr. and Mrs. Howarth, and all Celia's present attainments, even to the new home they were planning.

“Eleanor,” he cried in frightened tones, “you will never go away, you will never leave me?”

“Not if you want me.” She said it clearly.

“Go on,” he said, “I feel as if I could sleep. Do you remember how you used to say verses long ago — some of the old things.”

He fell into a slumber. Even then she dared not cry. Oh, the poor pinched, pitiful face! Fourteen of the best years of a man's life gone, wasted utterly, and for the others, who could tell. Had not a divine finger written in awful clearness — “The wicked shall not live out half his days.”

The nurse came in softly, and smiled. “He has slept so little,” she said in her soft, trained tone. “You would



be a tonic for any invalid," and she smiled again. "Will you have some luncheon sent up?"

"Not until he wakes."

She heard Bertie's step and voice presently, and some hand restrained him unwillingly. There were low voices and rustling movements, but no one came until the doctor's ring roused him.

He glanced at her in a startled manner.

"Oh, I remember," with a gasping sort of breath that came only from his chest. "I have had such a delightful sleep. Oh, I feel as if I might get well. Don't you think I might?" with the pitiful entreaty of a child.

The doctor entered and expressed much gratification. He talked awhile with the nurse, but kept glancing furtively at the sick man, and Eleanor knew his doom was sealed.

They had some lunch afterward. Then he talked again hopefully. At least, he might live some time. He had a horrible shrinking from that last final step.

"There is something else I must do. I made a will," and a faint color stained his face, "but even the lawyer had the grace to tell me it was unjust. O Nelly, can a man be forgiven — by such a wife?"

It was such an exceeding bitter cry. All the man's complacency and blinding selfishness had been swept away.

Eleanor Marshall could endure no more. She dropped her head down on the pillow and sobbed. Ah, could he guess all the wealth of love he had misused, despised?

"Tom," she cried with passionate anguish, "tell me one thing — was there any time when I might have saved you, when greater patience, greater faith, greater tenderness —"

"Nelly, you were an angel then, ever! Some better man should have married you and not robbed you of fourteen years. Oh, my God, how shall I answer for it at the last!

No, my darling, you did all a woman could. Let me tell the truth, and it may comfort you after I am gone. That cursed poison takes away a man's very soul, brutalizes every faculty, stupifies him. He may have moments of regret, but they are so weak, so faint, compared to the giant passion that enslaves him. To my lasting shame I confess that nothing made any impression. If health and strength had not given way utterly — nay, let me talk," as she glanced entreatingly at him. "In spite of what the doctor said — that my heart had been taxed to its last capacity, I made one more horrible plunge," — it was curious now to see the shivering disgust in every feature. "For weeks I lay at death's door, and some peculiar physical change must have taken place. I could not bear the sight nor smell of the vile stuff. It sickens me now," with ineffable shrinking. "I have not even a man's triumph over a powerful temptation to offer you. I am abased above measure. Was it the hand of God? And in some dim way I came slowly back to my senses and remembered that I was a rich man and could be a decent man, but noble or honorable I have not been! O Nelly, what utter madness, what blind self-complacency kept me from you! What wretched, wretched vanity, because I knew my money would make me no hero in your eyes. No, my darling, you did more than a woman's duty, or a wife's duty. God will bear witness to that. And my will does not place you where you must be placed. Will you ring the bell?"

She stood there firm, tender, decided, yet with no aggressiveness.

"Tom," she said softly, "you can give me a greater pain still. You can cause it to be said that in a few hours I persuaded you to change your mind to enrichen me, perhaps at the cost of some other," and her face flushed with pain. "Whatever it is, let it stand. I am in no need. I am no beggar, not even a suppliant for money."

"But it may ruin the boy," he groaned. "Nelly, he has some of my qualities, I see them in him."

"Never mind about it to-day. And whatever change you may make in regard to him, keep your bequest to your mother — to others."

"You generous angel!"

He sank back on the pillow. Even now he could not wholly comprehend her, his nature was not grand enough, there were far-reaches in her that he must have always have passed by; but with eyes suddenly opened he realized the nobility of the soul he had so slighted and wounded.

She ministered to him gently. She had the rare faculty of not making any attention oppressive, of not thrusting any special personality before anyone, and all about her was so harmonious. She was generous of her powers without that intense shrinking from opposite temperaments which so strongly affects some sensitive natures.

Presently he roused himself again.

"Nelly," he said more feebly. "I want you to see mother and Kate. I had no right to come to them first, that was not their fault, my cowardice would not allow me to take the right step. And — you will never leave me again?" pleadingly.

"No," with her cheerful bravery.

The meeting was a little awkward with Mrs. Vanduyne, but Mrs. Marshall was so moved by the prospect of death that she felt like clinging to any sure support, and then she was not assured in her own soul that Tom's course had been entirely right.

The next morning Thomas Marshall seemed really improved. His eyes were brighter, his voice stronger. Bertie was allowed a brief while in the sick room, and his mother was quite amused at the air of importance he assumed, which would have been unendurable but for his

sunny, volatile nature, that brought so many changes and such bright moods. He could not seem to realize that his father's illness was at all serious. Spoiled in some respects he certainly was, but far from being disagreeable.

Mr. Marshall insisted upon seeing his lawyer the following day, and was a long while in consultation with him. Eleanor made no further comment, though she felt that if it was possible she would like to refuse the greater portion of her husband's wealth. Being enriched by his death filled her whole soul with repugnance.

But it seemed, indeed, as if she gave him life out of her own generous vitality. Dr. Brientnall was amazed. He had been greatly prejudiced against her, but seeing her here in the sick room disarmed him completely.

"You are the best of medicines," he said with admiration. "I did not think Mr. Marshall could live ten hours when you were sent for, and now, to all appearances, he may live weeks."

The nurse was equally charmed. She would not allow Eleanor to exhaust herself, but, indeed, there seemed no danger. If she was absent for a few hours Mr. Marshall drooped noticeably. His eyes followed her every motion with such a beseeching expression, that at times it was positively painful. And her task was far from being easy. There were hours when he was irritable and restless to such a degree that even Eleanor's large patience was severely taxed. He liked so to hear her talk. He was hungry now for all the little details of their life, and so interested in Celia's career. She had been sent for and was staying with Daisy. He was very proud of what she had achieved, and yet he did not get on with her as well as with Daisy. Curiously enough, she brought his past before him much more vividly. Her clear eyes seemed written full of remembrances from which he shrank, while Daisy's brightness was of the present moment. She

had not learned from that large and sorrowful experience to be pitiful, and perhaps her own heart was too sore, as well.

It would no longer do to ignore Mrs. Marshall. Friends sent in flowers and gifts of choice fruit, and when she went out for her daily drive, one and another gave her a deferential recognition. Mrs. Wilder called, and the two old ladies renewed their friendship that had been rather cool through these years of trouble.

Eleanor Marshall could not deceive herself in regard to her affection for her husband. She had so far outgrown him, that in any case there must have been a continual struggle in her mind to keep herself on the level of her duty. She had seen so much larger hearted and higher toned men, and through these years she had reached a more elevated plane herself.

"Eleanor," he said one day, "do you suppose Mr. Howarth would come over here? I want to thank him for all he has done for Celia, and I have been thinking that I would like to ask a favor of him. I knew him a little, once, you remember. I should like to leave Bertie in just such hands — he will be hard for you to manage, my darling, and I begin to realize that a man, to be any kind of power in the world, must have force of character, and staunch integrity. Bertie has some of my weak points. Would you like — would *you* feel it too much of an obligation."

"I should like it," she replied frankly. "I think Mr. Howarth would not decline, though it is but fair to ask him."

Eleanor invited them both, for she knew Mrs. Vanduyne would be glad to meet Mrs. Howarth. And that Tom should desire the very thing that she had thought over in quite a different fashion seemed marvellous.

He was greatly pleased with the interview, and entrusted some other business matters to Mr. Howarth's

care. The two women had a sad, sweet confidence, and it strengthened Eleanor to go on with her duty.

Mrs. Van Cleve was warmly sympathetic. Indeed it seemed to Eleanor as if friends conspired to uphold her with the utmost love, that her heart should not fail in the darkest hour.

There were many that weighed heavily upon her in spite of her buoyant temperament. When she tried to lead the trembling, shrinking soul to the sure support that had been her stay in many a troublous hour, she found so few salient points in the man's character; even now the soul appeared dulled by the past excesses and hardly capable of any vital belief for himself. He clung to her faith, as if in some way it would be strong enough for both. He was like a child in her hands in this respect, plastic, believing because she said it, and yet shrinking horribly from the thought of death. He even planned to live awhile. It seemed quite possible.

"And we might go somewhere presently, Nelly," he said. "I think you would like Florida. When I can travel a little we might take it by easy stages, just you and I, a kind of wedding journey again. It is quite as if we had been remarried. If you could only forget all those wretched years."

"You will not let me;" with tender reproach in her voice. "You keep going back to them."

"Fourteen wasted years out of a man's life! Oh, how could anyone be so weak and blind!"

How many times she had said it, but she did not echo it now. She comforted with caressing touches and tried to soothe with precious promises.

The end came mercifully at last. It was one morning in March. He appeared quite bright, and they had taken some breakfast together in his room. She had been reading a book of poems to him, and he asked her to get it. Her voice always tranquillized and inspirited.

He put out his hand presently and she took it. His hands were often so cold that it did not alarm her, but now they grew cooler, it appeared to her. Then she looked at him in a vague, alarmed manner.

"Nelly!" A half smile parted his lips. There was a little flutter in the throat and the waxen eyelids drooped of their own accord.

She bent over and kissed him and uttered a brief prayer. Her duty to Thomas Marshall had ended. He seemed almost like the little child she had kissed for the last time and laid away in silence.

Thomas Marshall's funeral was a most honorable one. Many there were who never knew all the depths through which he had plunged, with no real desire to rise. Unbroken prosperity might have saved him from much of it, but he had not the vital pith that buffets adversity and gives back blow for blow.

"How strange," said Miss Parker to Miss Allington, "that Mrs. Marshall's very first order here was for mourning—there was a death at the Fairchilds',—and now I am making hers."

Westwater could no longer afford to disdain Mrs. Marshall. It was sad that she should have so stepped out of her position, but now that she was wealthy it was looked upon as a kind of escapade. The mockery stung her. Was it indeed true that money bought everything?

The death of his father was a great shock to Bertie, and he clung passionately to his mother again. As she studied the entreating eyes and kissed the throbbing lips, she wondered a little what manner of man could be evolved from the boyish soul; if he could be made strong enough to resist temptation when his trial hour came.

She sorrowed more for Thomas Marshall's wasted years than for his untimely death; yet she knew that it would not be well to brood exclusively over that. Both were in the keeping of a merciful God.

For a while she and Celia remained with Daisy. Mr. and Mrs. Van Cleve were going abroad in the summer, and persuaded her to accompany them. Mrs. Linthorpe resolved to join the party. It seemed so strange after these years of penury and labor, not only to be free for leisure and cultivation, but to be rich beyond one's needs. Daisy and Celia were heiresses, and everybody admitted they always had thought that pretty Mrs. Galbraith charming. Even Mrs. Mountjoy extended a rather stiff cordiality to her cousin once more.

Alice had at last achieved an engagement, though it was not to her mother's liking. A young lawyer with all his fortune yet to make, the son of a rather pretentious family, who were continually striving to keep a somewhat precarious footing on the higher rounds of society.

Violet was in the depths of an intense friendship for a young lady who had taken a physician's degree abroad, and began to entertain serious thoughts of a career, to her mother's great disgust.

"I suppose," said Mr. Van Cleve dryly, "if the Marshall girls had thrown themselves at Percy's head, as the Mountjoy girls have done, we should call it the manners of the counter. I am really sorry to have Alice marry young Danforth and begin a life of pretence, but I am glad Percy did not select her."

Mrs. Van Cleve smiled a little, a curious, indrawn smile. It seemed to her the hand of Providence had interposed in Celia's unfortunate engagement, that had taken her so by surprise.

It might have forever remained known only to a few, but for an incident that occurred in the summer. Mrs. Sherrard died very suddenly. She had been out driving in the morning and after her luncheon settled herself in her high-backed chair to sleep, and there her maid found her dead two hours afterward. Whether it was that she could not wholly trust her son's word, or that she had



simply delayed changing her will, her son was never to know, though he would have given worlds not to have offered such a document for probate. It was discovered in some way, and created no end of comment.

"Did you know anything about it?" some one asked of Mrs. Howarth, and that lady never before had gossiped with such a relish.

"They were engaged before Miss Marshall visited me last summer at Newport," said she quietly. "It was not to be made public under a year or two, as she was very anxious to distinguish herself in her art."

"And now she has a fortune, I understand, and will doubtless have a great deal more when her mother is done with it. She was a charming girl. What a pity it did not come a little sooner. Why he might marry her now!"

"She would never have him relinquish his birthright, Sherrard House. When she found his mother was opposed to it, she insisted upon giving him up, for she would never have been perfectly happy under the shadow of his mother's displeasure. She is so devoted to her own mother that she is fain to judge all others by herself."

"It is not often," said one lady rather sharply, "that we see so much respect paid by children in this degenerate age, though I cannot consider Mrs. Sherrard worthy of it. Such people would soon narrow the world to absolutely nothing. I sometimes wonder why wealth is allowed to be kept in such channels, for it seems only an instrument of wrong and cruelty."

In truth Mrs. Sherrard would have felt much mortified had she known the small esteem in which the world held her, and how ready it was to get along without her wonderful influence in upholding it. Even Thomas Marshall had more sincere mourners.

The Marshall fortune had been a subject of much interest in Westwater. The children shared alike a handsome amount upon reaching their majority, and provision

was made for Bertie's education. With his mother Tom had dealt generously, and amply repaid his sister for any trouble. All the rest was left unconditionally "to my dear wife Eleanor Marshall," and was perhaps the highest justification he could have given her.

Celia and her mother made their preparations to go abroad. Bertie was left in Mr. Howarth's care; indeed, Mrs. Howarth proffered a mother's watchfulness to her friend. These children had come to have an especial nearness for her. Indeed the brief parting with Celia gave her a severe wrench.

"I am afraid you will find Bertie a good deal of trouble," Mrs. Marshall said. "Mr. Marshall did not count upon Mr. Howarth being so truly a father to him."

"Yet Mr. Marshall could hardly have paid my husband a finer tribute than to have trusted his son with him," she answered proudly.

What that year brought to Celia Marshall in depth and richness all her after-life betrayed. The beneficence of wealth in its highest and most generous aspects wrought something more truly perfect than the hardships of poverty could have done. Hers had never been a self-indulgent nature — its early cares and responsibilities had been too deeply taken to allow of that. But in this sunshine she expanded. The almost divine youthfulness of her mother's soul reacted upon hers; that soul which has drank from the "living waters," through sorrow, trouble, and joy, and rejoices anew with every fresh day, not by forgetting the past, but making it indeed the stepping-stones to higher things. She seems, indeed, almost like one who has had no shadow in the past, but it is because she has so wrapped them around with the shining raiment of duty, so glorified them in the perfect trust with which she left all hard and unsolved problems in the hand of God, to be read and explained in that other country, where one will see "face to face."

Celia Marshall will never make the fine, imposing, electric kind of a woman that her mother is, but she has a delicate, impassioned charm of her own in her refined, enthusiastic face. Exceeding purity is in her and of her, a fresh, tender elusive radiance that seems like a draught from some half-hidden, limpid, crystal spring.

The next summer the Howarths with Bertie and Percival Chantrey joined them. Bertie had improved in some indescribable manner; the companionship of a man like Mr. Howarth had stirred the latent qualities which under a weaker hand might have lain forever dormant. The frivolous, volatile boyishness was giving way to reverence and admiration for the strong qualities of finer, truer manhood than any he had inherited from his father. Mrs. Howarth's heart had been curiously touched as well. Mrs. Marshall saw with a feeling of dismay, at first, that her child might come in time to belong to them. Could she lay a better gift of gratitude on the shrine of so perfect a friendship?

They spent the late autumn on the shores of France and in Spain. Percival Chantrey proved an admirable and most fascinating guide and companion. He and Celia drifted together—no new desire on his part, but one shaped and wrought with exceeding patience. They could all tell how it would be with these two rare souls made for each other from the beginning, and drifting slowly to the large awaiting, to the work of earnest manly and womanly lives, which position, intellect, and wealth mark out for them. Daisy Galbraith may be a queen in the realm of fashion and pleasure, never heartless or selfish or utterly given over to frivolity; but Celia's influence will lie in that higher atmosphere, love inwrought with duty, like a garment broided with precious gems.

She knows now that her feeling for Fairfax Sherrard was not in any sense a high, commanding love. There was some fatal weakness or defect in the man, some in-

ability to grasp the electric truths of life with that clear instinct and far reaching faith. Always she would have been striving to lift him up. Is he indeed a Launcelot to this Sir Galahad?

There is a lovely home in Westwater, not as magnificent as the Howarths' — their time of accumulated richness has not yet come. To be received at Mrs. Chantrey's is a compliment quite worth striving for, as, though they are generous, many still stand without. There are some bright and lovely children, but Mrs. Van Cleve and Mrs. Marshall have a way of dividing them up, that leaves their mother leisure for her studio, whither Paul Thierry, now grown a stout, white-haired, rather indolent fellow, but exceedingly charming, and his dainty wife, who is like an exquisite picture with the secret of eternal youth, often find their way.

Another man drops in, a welcome guest, who brings the fragrance of society that he can never quite do without. In his secret heart there often comes a longing that his had been a soul of larger measure and capability. He and Celia clasp hands over the chasm, not blindly shutting their eyes, but on the level of pure and perfect friendship between a man and a woman, just as Celia has seen this in the lives of her mother and Mr. Howarth.

The young man growing up between them has made the two women sisters in soul. They both wield a wide influence, and bravely face great truth, high duties, but do not divorce them from exquisitely clean and pure womanly lives, though both have reached their height through such different ways, over paths totally unlike.

But Mrs. Mountjoy can never forget that Eleanor made bonnets and stood behind a counter. She wonders a little how the world can forgive such a sin against its code, and how her brother, a man of mark, fresh from Parisian culture and old-world pride, looks upon it as a brave and well won victory, and can talk of nothing but Eleanor and her children.

Truly, truly, the victories and successes of Mrs. Mountjoy's years are barren and unsatisfactory.

"Yet," says Eleanor to him with her radiant smile, "it is Mr. Marshall's money which enables the world to see that I have any virtues." It will never render her bitter or scornful, but its deference cannot blind her clear eyes.

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